Encounter

April 1978 80p

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A New Long Poem

Michael Josselson
General & Poet

Douglass Cater
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Jan Morris
Words for Whom?

L. P. Wilkinson
A "Classical Approach" to Over-Population & Birth Control

Legends Spies Tell

ROBERT CECIL re-examines the story of Burgess, Maclean & Philby

Foreign Policy Follies

RICHARD PIPES
LEOPOLD LABEDZ

reply to George Kennan & Mr X's New Line

Galbraith on **Minogue**
(and vice versa)

Edited by Melvin J. Lasky & Anthony Thwaite

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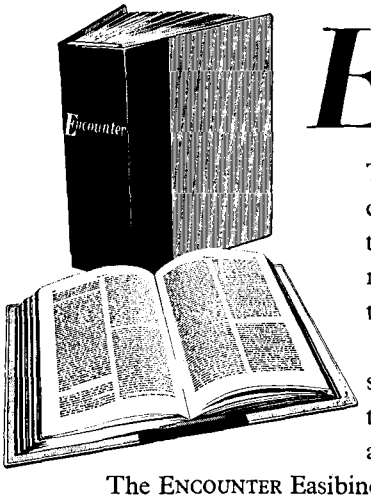

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APRIL 1978
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Naomi Shepherd

In Transit

SHE CAME IN ON an early flight from Brazil, on a brilliant spring morning. The other passengers belonged to an organised tour, carried cameras, and were presented with orange sunhats. She carried no camera and no one was foolhardy enough to offer her a sunhat.

She collected her suitcase from the moving luggage-belt on its second journey round. The first time there were too many people jostling for position, and she stood aside until the field was clear. Although the suitcase was clearly heavy, no one tried to help her. She did not look as if she would welcome helpers.

She put the suitcase on a trolley and went over to the glass wall which divided the waiting area from the arrival hall, behind which a crowd was observing the arriving passengers. People waved, fidgeted, knocked on the glass, a pantomime which she watched from the side, recognising no one, recognised by no one. The crowds on either side of the glass wall diminished, the luggage belt stopped. She was left alone apart from uniformed men: customs officials, armed policemen.

After half an hour had passed, a man without uniform but with an official manner came over to her. At first he spoke in Hebrew, which she did not understand; then in English.

"May I look at your suitcase and your papers? Keys, please."

As he examined them he glanced at her: no sign of nervousness there, but hostility, yes, she was one of those people who hated having her belongings touched by strangers.

"Thank you." He straightened up, frowned.

"If you're waiting for someone, this isn't the place." He took the suitcase, and they went out through glass doors which parted automatically and back into the departure hall further along the airport building. The man put her suitcase on one of the red and green plastic chairs and went away. She sat down beside it.

HAIM, A CLERK newly recruited to airport administration, was reading *Time* magazine in his second floor office when the buzzer went. It was only five minutes to the end of his working day, which had been spent checking cost-of-living allowances paid to airport staff, and incidentally acquiring useful information from the files about the girls who worked on the ground floor. The other men who shared his office had gone home already.

"What?" said a girl's voice over the buzzer.

"*You* called *me*", said Haim.

"There's a woman here, arriving passenger, who's been sitting in Departures all day and hasn't moved. Will you handle it?"

"Isn't that Security?" asked Haim.

"She's been checked three times", said the girl. "She doesn't belong to Absorption either. They're always losing people, so we checked. Come and do something about her, they said."

Haim decided not to argue. He liked to think of himself as a troubleshooter, an English word for which there was no equivalent in Hebrew. So far, his initiative had been cramped in airport service. He had written letters to the manager suggesting methods for speeding up queues at immigration, cutting down on outgoing customs checks, and changing the seating in the

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departure hall. After a month he had been called into someone's office, which was packed with arguing men, and told: "We read your letter, don't sit down, if you push them through immigration too quickly they'll pile up the luggage and jam the exit; if you hurry customs, they put pressure on security, and those chairs are meant just for short waits. Keep official paper for your work."

"Where are you?" he asked the girl.

"Dina, at Information, in Departures."

Haim put *Time* in his jacket pocket and went downstairs. Dina was checking flight schedules at her desk in an almost empty hall, where the dust on the floor was visible in the shafts of late afternoon light coming from the glass façade. Dina was a pretty blonde girl with a glum expression which did not change when she looked up at him. Haim saw himself considered, challenged.

He put his elbows on the desk. "Why do the pretty girls always look angry and the plain ones smile?" he asked.

"What do you want of me?" the girl said, totally without expression. "That's the woman over there." She motioned with her head, without looking in the direction of a woman in black, sitting alone.

"Why did you call me?"

"Moshe told me to get someone from the second floor, and you were the first one to answer."

"What does he want me to do with her?"

"Find out where she's going, and get her there."

"And if she's waiting for someone?"

"So go and find out."

"Will you be here when I get back?"

"Doesn't suit you", said the girl, again without expression.

Haim put up his hands in mock surrender. It was difficult to start without data. It would be so much simpler if the personnel department would run all the girls' relevant statistics through their computer: Together with "married" and "single", there would be: "available, temporarily unavailable, pregnant, waiting for abortion, willing, preference for pilots, tourists, fellow employees" and so on. It would save time.

He walked over to the strange woman, wondering which approach to try. Should he behave like a policeman? or perhaps like a doctor?

"Good afternoon", he said. "I'm from airport administration."

She looked startled.

"Can I help you get a taxi? Where are you going?"

The woman appeared to be thinking over his questions. "I don't know yet", she said finally.

Haim had a brief sense of disappointment. The woman was just a nut case; it was too simple. Someone had told him they coped with several a day.

"Just a minute", he said.

He went back to Dina, who was doing her nails. They were long and curved, two rows of small daggers. Haim approved; he didn't like girls to have short, stubby fingers.

"Finished already?" she asked.

"She's crazy. Do we have a doctor available?"

Dina looked in the woman's direction. "She doesn't look crazy to me. How do you know?"

"She told me she doesn't know where she's going. Quietly, just like that."

"All right, I'll try and get a doctor. You stay with her."

Haim went back to the woman. "We'll have things fixed up for you soon", he said, nodding reassuringly, as if she had asked a question. The woman paid no attention to him. Haim offered her a cigarette.

"I don't smoke", she said.

"Are you here for a holiday?" asked Haim, crossing his legs and hooking one arm over the back of his slippery plastic chair. It was the only way to stop his buttocks slithering sideways. He could scarcely believe that the woman had sat here all day.

She looked at him severely. "I've already explained to you that I'm not sure yet. I came here on an impulse, and I may have made a mistake. The person I expected to meet me did not come, so I may decide to go to London. I really cannot understand why you should want to interfere."

HER TONE WAS authority personified, reminding Haim unpleasantly of the official who had rejected his letter. She was dismissing him. At first he was taken aback, wondering whether he had not made a fool

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of himself in sending for the doctor. The woman had spoken slowly and precisely, and her voice had a slight quaver, as if talking were tiring for her, but not a signal of distress.

Dina was on the telephone now. Haim mimed query by raising his right arm and wiggling his hand at the wrist. The girl shook her head as she put the telephone down.

Haim puffed a salvo of cigarette smoke in the woman's direction, and examined her carefully through the haze. He had been reading about body language, movements that gave things away; then he could follow up with negotiation psychology, conversational strategy. If he was unappreciated in the personnel department, he might consider a move to Security.

The woman opened her handbag, took out a handkerchief and blew her nose. He noticed that her hand shook slightly, like her voice. But her eyes were dry, her expression self-possessed, annoyed. He wondered whether he could ask to see her documents, and then decided he would make his assessments first, check later. He put her at somewhere between fifty and sixty years old, widowed or divorced, wealthy. She had probably been very good-looking, years ago; he was not in the habit of looking carefully at women of this age, and he was surprised at the elegance of her clothes. What could be the point of dressing so carefully when she had nothing to offer?

He muttered "Back in a minute", and strolled over to Dina's desk. There he turned, one elbow on the desk, poised to keep the woman in view.

"Well?" the girl asked.

"Difficult to say", said Haim. "She has very expensive jewellery, her handbag's real lizard, but she might be down to her last cent. Maybe she hasn't even the money for a taxi fare."

"You're a detective, are you?" Dina looked sceptical.

"Wait", he said cryptically, inhaling smoke.

"You'd be amazed how many mental cases we have in this place every day", said Dina. "Black Hebrews, hippies, junkies. And over at immigration they've got at least one stretcher case a week. When my aunt needed a gall-bladder operation it took three weeks to get a bed."

"Did you get through to the doctor?" asked Haim.

"He has someone in diabetic shock, like I told you." Haim did not want to listen to Dina's experiences, sensing that they were not offered in confidence, but part of a stock in trade.

"She's in shock, too, I'd say."

"What was she talking about then?"

"She's not making sense." He tapped on the counter. "Needs care. They'll make her relax, then she'll talk."

"Drugs?" asked Dina. She nodded knowledgeably. Then she looked back at the woman. "But she'd have to agree. I mean—she looks as if she wouldn't."

"That's just on the surface", said Haim. "In fact, I think she might crack up any minute." The confidence with which he said this, though he had not intended to go so far, affected Dina. She looked apprehensively in the woman's direction. "Four flights due in a few minutes", she said.

"Don't worry", said Haim. "I can handle her." He strode away from the desk, sensing that Dina was looking after him.

The woman had taken a leather notebook and a small gold pencil from her handbag and was making calculations. As Haim approached, she put it away.

He stood over her. He was not tall, but burly, blocking her light, and he knew that he was too near for her comfort.

"Look", he said. "If you'll tell me what the problem is, I can help you. If you want to go to a hotel, I'll fix it up. You want to make a call to the person who should have met you? I'll do that. Maybe we can get him here."

She shook her head. "No", she said. "I think perhaps he is not alive any more. I have to stay on my own, or go to London, to my son."

Now it's all coming out, thought Haim, with a sense of elation.

"Well then, I'll cable your son", he said briskly. "Just give me the name and the number, it's on the house."

"Certainly not", said the woman. "I know you want to help, but it is none of your business. I just need a little time to make the decision, and I would be grateful if you would just let me sit here quietly to think. I am not disturbing anyone."

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"You can't just sit around here, you know, this is a place for passengers. There are four flights leaving soon, and that means a lot of pressure. Noise, too, this isn't the place to think. Just tell me what the problem is. Look, you don't know me, so that ought to make it easier. Right?"

THE WOMAN looked at him now for the first time. She had large, dark eyes, a white, powdered face. A ruin, thought Haim, almost with resentment. A woman this age ought either to be a comfortable grandmother, or in some useful job. This woman wasn't self-supporting—that he was sure—but certainly used to giving orders. Supported all her life by some rich man. A man's woman, when the man was gone, that was his assessment.

She stood up; the high heels meant that she was slightly taller than Haim. "Then I shall go to the restaurant", she said. "Surely one is allowed to buy a meal here."

"Restaurant's closed for repairs", announced Haim. "There's a snack bar. Can we buy you a coffee?"

"No, thank you. Please take my suitcase to the left luggage."

As if she were talking to a servant, he thought angrily. He watched her tap away in the direction of the bar. With a bad grace, he lifted the heavy suitcase, took it over to the information desk and pushed it on to the counter. Dina was talking to a passenger, smiling, playing with a gold chain round her neck. Haim waited impatiently; then he lowered the suitcase over her side of the counter, letting it drop the few extra inches to the floor.

"What's going on?" Dina looked at the suitcase.

"Hang on to it. I have to keep track of her, follow her round the airport. Now she won't keep still. Keep trying for the doctor."

"Why, what's happened?"

"I can handle it, but see if you can get some sedatives from him, send someone over to get them if he can't come."

"Haim, if you need any help, I'm here." She actually smiled at him, a friendly, schoolgirl's smile, not the kind of smile he wanted but a smile none the less. Progress, he thought, we are making progress, and set off for the snack bar, elbowing his way past the passengers who had suddenly crowded into the departure hall.

The woman was sitting on a stool beside the snack bar. There was no cup in front of her and she was trying to catch the waitress's eye with a small, delicate movement of her gloved finger. Haim stood behind her. "You have to get a ticket at the cash desk", he said loudly over the buzz of other people's conversation. "I'll do it." Before she could move, he jumped the queue at the cash desk, snatched a ticket from the woman in charge, whom he knew, and was back, waving the ticket in the waitress's face. "Coffee", he said. "Black or white?"

The woman watched him stonily. "I should have preferred tea", she said. The quaver in her voice was more pronounced. "Very well—black."

He took the stool next to her. "Now, we have to decide quickly, because there are only two more European flights, and one only"—he held up a finger as if talking to a child—"one only to London. You don't want to be here all night, do you?"

The woman was silent.

"Why not stay on, tour the country? The Sinai coast is great this time of year. No, perhaps for a lady like you that would be too rough, simple accommodation, but there are very luxurious hotels in Eilat. Tel Aviv overnight, then Eilat. I guess you don't water-ski, no skin-diving—right?—but the rest would do you good. Then Jerusalem. If you like shopping for souvenirs, Jerusalem is the best place. Absolutely. Things that would cost you twice as much in Tel Aviv, coffee pots, necklaces—half the price in Jerusalem. You look like a lady who would enjoy the ruins. Here's your coffee."

He tipped in milk from a jug on the counter and pushed the cup towards her. Some of the coffee slopped into the saucer. "I'm sorry, let me."

The woman was drawing off her gloves. She had bony white hands, lined by the seams of the gloves. Haim watched her with some of the distaste he felt for old women in bathing costumes at the sea. Her hands were naked but for one gold ring. She stirred the coffee, then put the spoon gently back in the saucer.

"Hey, waitress", said Haim. "I said black coffee. The lady can't drink this."

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"It doesn't matter", said the woman faintly.

"You asked for black coffee, you'll get it", said Haim determinedly, pulling her coffee cup over to himself. He drank, and the skin from the warm milk adhered to his moustache. "I could see right away that you were a well-brought-up person, not used to looking after yourself. You have to learn to push a bit, otherwise you get pushed. If you ask for black coffee you must insist, right?"

"You are extremely impertinent", said the woman. She was tracing an invisible pattern on the counter with her forefinger.

"You aren't letting me help you", said Haim. He took a cup of black coffee from the waitress and put it on the counter. His left hand and arm were planted on the counter, between the woman and her coffee. He saw her look at the cup. She did not want to reach across and risk touching his arm. He noticed that she was very pale; she had probably eaten nothing since the morning, Haim thought.

"You aren't fair to me", he said, leaning towards her. "I'm doing everything I can to help you. In other countries, people have to look out for themselves; here we care about one another, you know. In London airport you could sit for weeks and no one would bother with you, you could drop dead."

HER EYES were fixed on the coffee cup. Slowly, Haim withdrew his arm. As she reached for the cup, he took an envelope of sugar from the saucer, tore it and shook the sugar into the coffee.

"You need energy", he said. "Here, have another one."

The woman took one sip of the coffee and put the cup back into the saucer. It rattled until she let go the handle. "I don't take sugar", she said. "I should like to leave on the London plane."

"Wait a second", said Haim. "That's fine, I'll fix it."

"Well?" asked Dina. She was combing her hair, and now shook it back over her shoulder in a pretty gesture. "You have milk all over your moustache."

Haim sucked at the moustache, looking at Dina. "That doesn't make you feel bad?" he asked. She shook her head. "Some people can't stand the sight of the skin on the milk", he said. "Fussy people."

"How's the lady?"

"She wants to leave on the London plane."

"I'll check", said Dina, glancing at her watch. "Hava was supposed to replace me at three-thirty, she's late."

"Wait a second", said Haim. "I don't think that woman ought to leave. She isn't well enough, and what happens if she breaks down on the plane? They'll tell us we caused the trouble."

"You keep saying she's going to break down, but I don't see any sign of it. You said yourself she's made a decision, she wants to get out of here, fine, let her go."

"All right", said Haim. "Book her on the London flight if you can. I'll get her name."

The woman had left the counter and was walking towards him. Was it his imagination or did she look distraught?

"Is it all right?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know", said Haim. "Come and sit down, you look bad." This time, he noticed, she almost collapsed on the slippery chair.

"Flights are heavily booked this week, you know, holiday time", said Haim rapidly. "Even for people like us who work at the airport it's hard to get a seat. Of course, we'll do our best to get you on if it's in our power. You made it very difficult for us sitting around here, you see, if you'd made up your mind this morning there might have been a chance, they put on an extra flight to London at midday, but you missed that one. Wait a minute though, I can see one possibility. If there's a really hard case, somebody died or something, I know one man who could get you on the plane; but you'd have to tell me the whole story. Once I've got that straight I might even be able to get you a first class seat, sometimes that's not occupied. Now if you just explain to me. . . ."

She had one hand in front of her eyes and had turned away from him. Haim looked at her carefully. There was no sign of the handbag, she must have left it at the bar, he thought. Leaving her, he collected the handbag and returned to Dina.

"That's it, she went to pieces", he said briskly. "Doctor free?"

As Dina spoke to the doctor, Haim watched the woman. He felt like a trainer with

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an athlete he had put through his paces. She was weeping freely now, her head bent low on her hands. Passengers were streaming into the arrivals hall, pulling handcarts, nudging forward children festooned with spare coats and parcels.

"He's coming straight over now, says he'll handle it", said Dina. She looked towards the woman and made a face. "Maybe we ought to go over to her?"

"No, leave her alone", he said. "She doesn't want people to talk to her." He tucked the lizard handbag under one arm while he lit a fresh cigarette.

"I don't know", said Dina. "It's worse because she's dressed up like that—you know—crying. Doesn't suit her."

"Leave her alone", repeated Haim.

Dina's replacement, Hava, hurried across the hall. She also was a pretty, sulky looking girl. Haim looked her over. She was fine too, he thought, but he had a start with Dina.

As if confirming this, Dina put her hand on his arm: "You were right, anyway."

Haim shrugged his shoulders. "Just a technique", he said. "Most people are easy to understand." He looked straight into Dina's eyes. "You know what I mean? They want you to understand them, even if they argue."

Dina fingered her gold chain. "Right."

"I'll give the doctor her handbag, and he can check the details without disturbing her", said Haim. "Then I'll give you a lift home, right?"

She nodded. The hall was now so full of people that the woman was almost hidden from sight. But as he chatted to Dina, Haim kept glancing at her through the crowd. It would be a nuisance if she bolted now.

Natural Colours

"Artists in England are paid too much"—**Prince Albert**

Aged shepherd and knotty crook
By tranquil grove or shady brook;
Rainbow, hay wain, happy gaze,
Perpetual slumberous clods and days;
Ruins are ruined, and waterfalls don't fall;
Definitive brushstrokes stroke them all
From ostentatious clouds to breathless dog
And thousand year old shepherd whistling God:
An Old Master,
a Constable,
worth millions,
hanging.

The knotty shepherd—a crooked sheep,
He had no copyright to keep,
No royalties from the artist's exhibitions,
Nor comfort from the artist's reproductions.
So he commissioned his very, very own,
Lifesketch at the flat rate of his lone
Life's loose change per square mile of Realist
Bog and stinking filth, endless wind, wetting mist,
Monochrome rainbow and honest grey snow:
An old master,
the shepherd,
worth nothing,
living.

Martin Stokes

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Robert Cecil

Legends Spies Tell

A Reappraisal of the Absconding Diplomats

ONE ELEMENT in the myth that has grown up around Philby, Maclean and Burgess is that of the happy band of brothers, working as a team for the *KGB*. This common assumption, which is very probably erroneous, derives from the fact that all three were Communists at Cambridge and their destinies were linked at the time of the flight of Maclean and Burgess to Moscow—"in my end is my beginning." Support for this assumption comes not only from authors claiming with varying degrees of plausibility to have some special insight into the relationship of the three spies, but also from Philby himself. His book, *My Silent War*,[1] has been given a measure of credence that can only be described as astonishing, in view of the fact that it represents the evidence of the prisoner in the dock about his movements on the night of the crime.

What is true is that Philby and Burgess became friends, as well as Communists, while at Trinity College, Cambridge. Their friendship persisted up to 1951, when it had a disastrous impact upon Philby's career in SIS and also upon his career as a Soviet agent. Before that date, however, there is no hard evidence linking Maclean's career as a spy with the covert activities of the other two men. Indeed, it would have been an elementary precaution on the part of their Soviet masters to keep the two principal agents, Philby and Maclean, in strictly separate compartments. Philby's failure to maintain this separation brought about his downfall, and he has been trying to cover his tracks ever since. Among his sparse pleasures in Moscow these days must be that of noting how well his fictions have gone down in the West.

Donald Maclean came up to Cambridge after Philby and Burgess; he never belonged to their set, and was at a different College. In the undergraduate jargon of the day, he was "an aesthete." He was handsome in a slightly effeminate way, but was not regarded by his friends as an homosexual. He worked hard and earned the first-class degree with which he went down in 1935. Although, unlike Philby and Burgess, he made no extravagant pro-Fascist gestures, designed to erase a known Communist past, nobody was particularly surprised when, sometime in 1934, he applied to the Civil Service Commission for a preliminary interview with the object of sitting the examination for the Diplomatic Service in the following year. Searching questions were asked at these interviews (as I know from my own experience). Maclean may well have been asked about his political sympathies. If so, his denial that he was still a Communist would have been accepted at face value.

It was indeed difficult to associate this elegant, cultured young man with "Red revolution", in spite of the evident sincerity of his concern for the down-trodden. He and I had been among those who walked out from Cambridge one murky afternoon in February 1933 to greet the Hunger Marchers, who were on their way to London. I had misgivings about my own sincerity (since I went partly to curry favour with an attractive Newnham girl, who did not want to go unaccompanied) but Maclean was more a man for a cause. When I went to see him in his "digs" a few weeks later, he complained that the Oxford Group, as Moral Rearmament was then called, had been trying to convert him from Communism; he would have been a "catch." But as I watched him lean back in a leather armchair and reach for another Turkish cigarette (he was already a heavy smoker), it never occurred to me that he was doing more than pursuing a young man's legitimate pastime of trying on a mask to see how it fitted. He was intelligent; he was the son of a former Cabinet Minister; such a man must surely be able to see that he could best change the system by joining it. That the mask he was fitting was that

[1] Kim Philby, *My Silent War* (1968). The quotations that follow are from the Panther paperback edition (1969).

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of the establishment itself seemed no more likely to me than it did to my betters.

WHATEVER MACLEAN LATER BECAME, at the outset of his career as a spy he was undoubtedly what is called an idealist. He fitted, if anyone at that time had succeeded in making the identification, the description of the agent in the Foreign Office given before the War by the Soviet defector, General Krivitsky: a young man of good family, who was an idealist and who worked without payment. This was one of the factors that made Maclean difficult to detect. There were in his life none of those sudden bursts of affluence that arouse suspicion. He had no private means and his circumstances often seemed more straitened than those of his diplomatic colleagues. If ever there was a moment when he could have used a well-camouflaged interest-free "loan" from his Soviet employers, it was in the autumn of 1950, when the Foreign Office had decided to overlook his escapades in Cairo and his wife, Melinda, had agreed to come back to him and seal the reunion with a third child. He badly needed money to buy "Beaconshaw", the house at Tatsfield in the Kent-Surrey commuter belt. But he had to borrow £2,000 from his mother-in-law, Mrs Dunbar, and the balance from a building society. After his disappearance, one of Melinda's worries was how to keep up the mortgage payments. It was nearly ten weeks later that the first anonymous remittance to Mrs Dunbar through a Swiss bank came in.

THE FIRST TIME I linked up with Maclean after his entrance into the Diplomatic Service was in Paris in 1938.

I soon noticed that he had become very nervous and tense. I ascribed this partly to pressure of work (it was the year of the Munich Conference) and partly to the intensive social life, to which he had taken aversion. Evidence is lacking whether at that date he had already been recruited by the Russians; if he had, the onset of the double life of an agent would also have accounted for his chronic state of anxiety. Later he became hardened, without ever acquiring the iron nerve of a Philby.

Marriage at first seemed to have a stabilising effect; he married Melinda, an attractive American girl, in the critical days of 1940, when the British Embassy in Paris was being evacuated. Back in London, he found a niche in the recently created and not very prestigious General Department, which dealt with shipping, contraband, and other aspects of economic warfare.

I was myself serving in the Foreign Office at this period. But in 1943 I was temporarily transferred to SIS, replacing Patrick Reilly (now Sir Patrick) as Personal Assistant to "*C*", the Head of the Secret Service. It is possible that this phase of my career, during which I came to know Kim Philby, may have made Maclean wary of me. After the War, when our careers overlapped again in Washington, I was sometimes conscious of a certain reserve on his part; indeed my wife was closer to Melinda than I was to Donald.

It has sometimes been assumed that Melinda must have been privy to Donald's covert activities. This was certainly not the case in Washington; nor, I believe, in the subsequent period prior to his defection. Melinda was not unintelligent, but she was in essence a non-political creature; great causes and international conflicts left her cold. By the time they reached Washington her husband's life was already becoming something of an enigma to her. She puzzled over his excessively long hours of work and his increasingly frequent bouts of morose humour. Above all, she worried about his drinking which, as she later told my wife, brought out the homosexual streak in him. In the Washington period he was never the worse for drink at moments when it mattered, but the problem had become one that Melinda discussed with close friends. She realised that Donald had a psychological problem; that it had ideological overtones did not, I believe, enter her mind.

On the surface all was going well. Indeed Washington was the high point of Maclean's career both as a British diplomatist and as a Russian agent. He was not, as has been erroneously stated, Head of Chancery, though he was acting Head for some time after the departure of Michael Wright (the late Sir Michael) in 1946. He worked long hours and acquired quick mastery over every subject entrusted to him. As with Philby, the secret of his success, in both his overt and covert role, was the efficiency with which he discharged his duties. This factor sharply distinguished both men from Guy Burgess, who was a slob in the office as well as a slob in the home. The most important task assigned to Maclean was the joint secretaryship of the Anglo-American Combined Policy Com-

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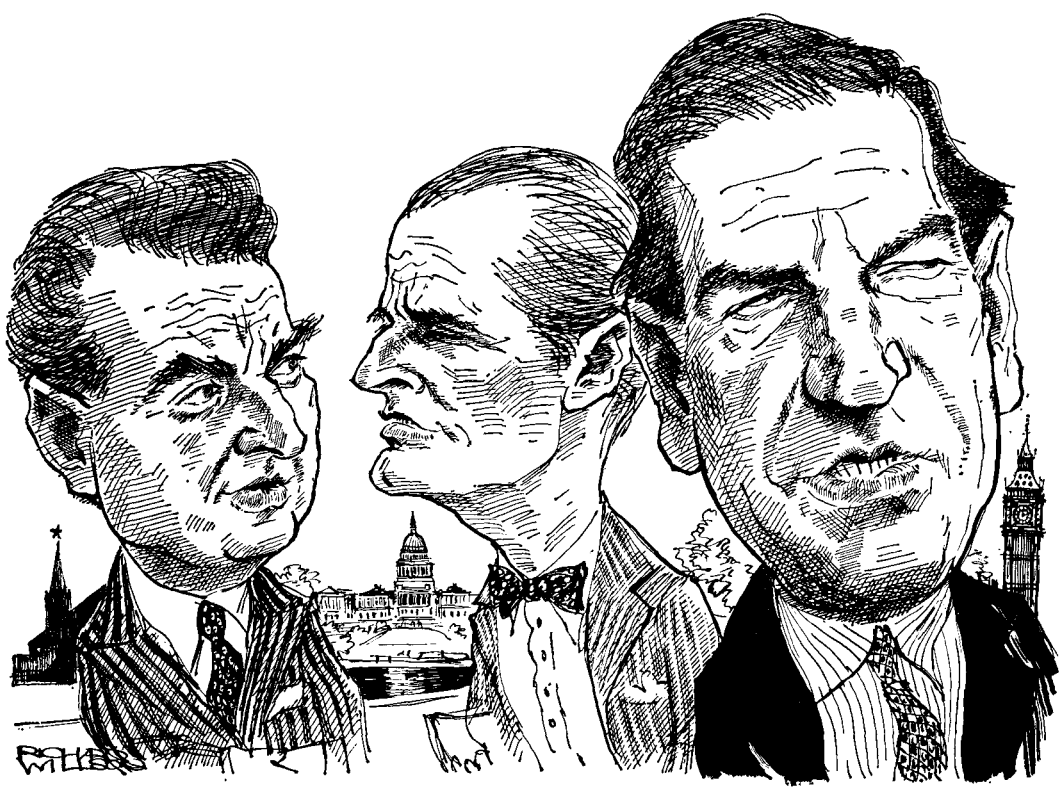
mittee on atomic energy. A good deal has been written about the services he was able to render his Russian masters in this capacity and I need not elaborate here.[2] It was also these services that later caused the greatest exacerbation in Anglo-American relations. The shock of surprise that followed the explosion of the first Russian atom bomb in 1949 started an active search for scapegoats, in which Maclean's claim to notoriety was second only to that of Klaus Fuchs.

I CAN RECALL from this period an occasion on which Maclean was well placed to serve his masters in the Kremlin. In the spring of 1948 he and I were the junior members of the Embassy team which accompanied Gladwyn Jebb (the present Lord Gladwyn, then serving in the Foreign Office) to a specially convened Anglo-American-Canadian meeting, at which the first discussion took place of the project that was formalised one year later as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The USA had never previously adhered to a military alliance in time of peace, and the State Department's apprehension that word might prematurely reach the Senate was almost as great as their fear that the USSR might hear of our discussions. To escape the curiosity of the press, we met not in the State Department, but in the Pentagon. The meeting lasted most of the day, but there was no break for lunch; we ate sandwiches round the table. No notes were taken. I have sometimes thought that, at that juncture, Maclean could have created more confusion in the Western world by a leak in Washington than by his secret line to the Kremlin, where news that a common front was being constructed in the West probably had a salutary effect.

One of the State Department officials with whom Maclean had dealings was Alger Hiss, whose ordeal had begun before Maclean left Washington. It was in August 1948 that Hiss appeared before the Committee on Un-American Activities, of which Congressman Richard Nixon

[2] See, for example, *Philby: The Spy Who Betrayed a Generation*, by Bruce Page, David Leitch and Philip Knightly (Penguin, 1969), Chapter 14. The same authors added to the material in this chapter, using FBI sources, in an article in the *Sunday Times* of 27 November 1977.



BURGESS, MACLEAN & PHILBY

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was the leading light. Many years later I asked Hiss at a social gathering how well he had known Maclean. My curiosity was genuine, but perhaps not very tactful; and Hiss, who has always strenuously denied having worked for the Communist cause, resented the question. However in the summer of 1948, in which I, too, left Washington, Maclean would not have been the only member of the Embassy staff who sympathised with Hiss in his predicament. The brief, vicious era of Senator Joseph McCarthy was beginning to cast its shadow, and the political atmosphere was heavy with innuendo and crude ideological over-simplification. It was a climate in which anti-Americanism could readily take root, as a startled world began to take in the reality of the USA's overwhelming power, and some also began to doubt the perceptiveness and integrity of leading Americans, especially some of those in Congress.

Maclean went to Cairo on promotion in the autumn of 1948 with an unblemished record; he was the youngest Counsellor in the Foreign Service (as it had become). But within a year, though he did not yet know it, the finger of suspicion had begun to point towards him, as a result of an FBI investigation into a leak of atomic secrets. This investigation linked his fate for the first time to that of Philby, who in 1949 was transferred to Washington by SIS for liaison with the CIA and FBI. In the course of his preliminary briefing in London, he had seen the FBI's list of suspects and drawn his own conclusions. There is no reason to believe that the paths of Philby and Maclean, as spies, had ever crossed before. Indeed it would have been an elementary precaution on the part of the *KGB* to prevent this from happening. If the same precaution had been observed in the case of Guy Burgess, who had continued to maintain an open friendship with Kim Philby, the latter, who by 1950 was incomparably the most valuable of the three agents, need never have been compromised.

THIS CONSIDERATION ALONE must necessarily raise doubt in one's mind whether Guy Burgess had ever been in direct Soviet employment. Philby's own evidence on this point is curiously oblique. He merely states that he "put forward his [i.e. Burgess'] name as a possible recruit." One can accept Philby's statement that he had, on occasion, used Burgess as a courier. No doubt he was also used as a sub-agent during the period when, as personal assistant to Hector McNeil, the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, he had access to highly classified files and telegrams. But this spell of privileged access had ended a couple of years before Burgess himself was transferred in 1950 to the Embassy in Washington. Although McNeil had insisted that Burgess be admitted to the Service, the Foreign Office had stubbornly refused to have him in the senior Branch "*A*". His career was therefore destined to follow a downward course, quite apart from the damage inflicted upon it by his own sordid private life—though in his case the word "private" is hardly appropriate. One factor that spoke for Burgess in his struggle to get himself established was his friendship with Guy Liddell, the respected Deputy-Director of *M.I.5.* Like all friends of Burgess, Liddell lived to regret the connection; within a few days of Burgess' disappearance Liddell had been demoted to Chief Security Officer at Harwell.

After Burgess returned in disgrace to London in the spring of 1951, he was heard saying at a party, "I've got a Roger Casement complex." It was at the same time an apt comment and also an example of behaviour that no self-respecting Intelligence Service, least of all the *KGB*, could have been expected to tolerate.

BURGESS' ARRIVAL in Washington in 1950, which Philby had no means of averting, faced him with an agonising decision. Burgess, drunk or sober, was a very persistent and demanding guest. If Philby tried to cold-shoulder him, he aggravated the risk of becoming a victim of one of Burgess' notorious indiscretions. If he offered hospitality, which meant overcoming his wife's strong objections, he would become identified with his guest's gross misdemeanours. This is, in fact, what occurred. Philby, in retrospect, has put the best face he can on the series of disasters that followed. He claims to have initiated Burgess "into the secret of the British Embassy source" and to have used him to warn Maclean by word of mouth, after Burgess had cooperated by deliberately committing motoring offences in order to ensure his recall to London.

IT MUST BE CLEAR to anyone familiar with the case that none of this makes sense.

Philby asserts that his Russian "control" agreed to his informing Burgess because "Guy's special knowledge of the problem might be helpful." But

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Maclean and Burgess were not friends. Their careers had not overlapped; Melinda had never even met Burgess. Since Burgess did not know Maclean was in trouble, how could he have "special knowledge of the problem"? So far from Burgess having schemed to bring about his swift removal from Washington, we have the rather more reliable testimony of Lord Greenhill (*The Times*, 7 September 1977) that Burgess was furious when he heard the Ambassador's decision. Well he might be, as he would find himself back in London with no job and diminished prospects.

Least plausible of all is the suggestion that the only way to warn Maclean was to project the egregious Burgess across the Atlantic. This cumbersome manoeuvre might have made sense in the 19th century, but not in the 20th. Philby had at his disposal the entire resources of the *KGB*. It is true that Maclean's movements in London were by this time under surveillance. But,

Philby and the Old Country

Moscow

"AS I LIVE AND BREATHE, *Dick Beeston," Kim Philby said to me in his old familiar voice last night [7 February 1978] at the Bolshoi. "And Moyra," he said turning to my wife during an interval of the opera "Otello."*

"I heard you were here in Moscow. "I hope the Soviet authorities are looking after you well," said Philby who has been called the most successful double agent of his time in the Cold War and one of the most dangerous British traitors of the century. At the Bolshoi he introduced my wife and me to his new wife Nina, smartly dressed in a black top and velvet skirt and about 20 years younger than Kim.

Although it was more than 15 years since I had seen him when we were colleagues in Beirut, he was instantly recognisable. "How do you think he looks?" Nina asked me. "Older," I replied, "but fitter than when I last saw him."

"I don't drink as much as I did in the Beirut days," he said. "I'm fighting the battle of the waist." He had slimmed down but also looked somewhat shrunken.

"How are you finding things in Moscow," Kim asked. I told him it was extremely difficult to do my job because, although I have been in Russia more than six months, the Soviet authorities have still failed to provide me with either a flat or an office.

"Actually I'm leaving for a bit soon," Kim replied. "But," he added with his special disarming smile, "It wouldn't do to have you staying in my place, rifling around with my papers."

HE ASKED ABOUT **my family and I told him that my son was attending his old school Westminster.**

"Ah Westminster" he said. "You should be careful, sometimes they produce some, some . . ."

"Bad hats," I suggested, and he grinned.

His stutter was still apparent but not the excruciating speech impediment he had displayed during his last heavy-drinking days in Beirut when we were neighbours of Kim and his now dead American wife, Eleanor. His fourth wife Nina, elegant and attractive, who is Russian and spoke a little English, told my wife: "He likes to come to the Bolshoi. But I find it difficult to get tickets because most of them go to foreigners."

"I see you've stopped smoking," Kim said to me, observant as ever. "I've been smoking for 48 years and I intend to smoke for another 48," he added.

I MENTIONED **a play by Alan Bennett I had recently seen in London, "The Old Country" with Alec Guinness who plays the part of a British traitor exiled in Russia. Guinness in the play says the Soviet Union, which has no national anti-smoking campaign, is the only place where you can smoke without the danger of getting cancer.**

"I heard of the play: it sounds rather silly," said Kim.

But to my mind the Philby I met at the Bolshoi, still totally English, seemed very close to the man that Guinness portrayed.

I HAVE OFTEN *wondered what it would be like to meet Kim again—someone I had known well and liked for many years, whom I never suspected and who, subsequently, became so notorious. It was the very everydayness and familiarity of the occasion, as if nothing had happened to a friendship except the passage of time, when so much has happened, that I found so strange. "Au revoir," said Kim at the end of the interval. "I hope we meet again."*

PHILBY, **whose devotion to Communism began at Cambridge in the 1930s, joined the British Secret Service in 1940. He rose to the top ranks of the service while all the time supplying the Kremlin with secrets of the West.**

In 1963 when British Intelligence obtained the full evidence of his treachery Philby defected to Moscow from Beirut and has been living there ever since, rarely seen by Westerners. He has been well treated in Moscow and is known to hold a senior rank in the K G B.

Richard Beeston
in the *Daily Telegraph*

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as he well knew, he was not being "tailed" in Tatsfield; the plan of escape, indeed, rested upon this assumption.

No, there is only one intelligible interpretation. Philby made a disastrous series of blunders and he has subsequently tried to cover them up. In the process, he has foisted upon a gullible public his myth of the three gallant workers for world peace, hotly pursued by the hounds of capitalism, but loyal to one another to the last.

> "First [he writes] it was essential to rescue Maclean before the net closed on him.... It was quite enough that he was an old Comrade."

Reading this passage in the knowledge that, a few years later, Philby was to seduce the old Comrade's wife, it is hard to fight down symptoms of nausea.

The truth is, of course, very different. The gallant band was at sixes and sevens. Burgess let down Philby by defecting with Maclean and so exposing his Washington host. Philby let down Maclean by sending to SIS, as he himself admits,

> "a memorandum ... suggesting that we might be wasting our time in exhaustive investigation of Embassy menials. I recalled the statements of Krivitsky...."

It was the Russian defector who had first drawn attention to the idealist working in the Foreign Office; Philby, to save his skin, had pointed the finger at his "old Comrade."

He has related in an earlier passage how he became impatient with the insistence of the FBI upon checking "the sweepers, cleaners, bottle-washers and the rest ...." This insistence may have been influenced by the famous "Cicero" case, perhaps the most notorious episode of War-time espionage, which involved the valet of the British Ambassador in Ankara. It must also have been reinforced in 1946 by the arrival as Ambassador in Washington of Lord Inverchapel —accompanied by a Russian valet, who had been presented to him, like some mediaeval serf, by Stalin!

ON A LOWER DRAMATIC LEVEL there was also the strange case of Maclean's Jamaican maid. It was very difficult in Washington to procure servants at moderate prices to meet the scale of entertainment demanded. Maclean, another member of Chancery and I therefore clubbed together to import Jamaican help; the initiative, as far as I recall, lay with Maclean, who indented for two women. On the night of their arrival, I was the only one free of engagements, so I went to the station to collect the women and deliver them to their new homes. A few months later one of Maclean's Jamaicans was identified by the FBI as a Communist and deported from the country.

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT, of course, that the investigation would sooner or later have isolated Maclean, as other suspects were gradually eliminated. But the intervention of Philby, whose standing in Whitehall was high, must have speeded up the decision to concentrate on Maclean and confront him with the evidence, as soon as it was regarded as adequate for the purpose. If we reject the main outline of the Kim Philby version, as I have suggested, we are still left with two unsolved questions. How did Guy Burgess find out about Maclean? Why did he go with him to Moscow?

The first question poses few problems. Philby, on his own admission, took home documents for photocopying. The *KGB* had instructed him to report in detail on the Maclean case, and nothing is more probable than that Philby had in his house documents from which Burgess was able to conclude that Maclean was in danger. Presumably Philby adopted at home some measures of security. But it was common knowledge among those rash enough to entertain Burgess that he soon reduced everything around him to chaos. The fact that Philby shared some of his drinking bouts makes it all the less likely that home-made security precautions would have been proof against Burgess' prying eyes.

To answer the second question requires some insight into the situation in which Guy Burgess found himself on his return to London. He had been one of the gilded youth of his generation at Cambridge, one for whom all doors would open and from whom no secrets would be hid. At forty, however, he was an ageing juvenile lead, rapidly running out of roles. One by one his less gifted friends and acquaintances had found niches for themselves; but his career had followed a declining curve and now seemed to have come to a stop. He had never been sustained by ideological conviction, only by an obsessive need to be in the know, to have a finger on the political levers that moved the world. The end of his brief Foreign Service career, which could be only a matter of weeks, would put an end to any residual usefulness he might still have had for Philby and the *KGB*.

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It must have been, above all, his sense of his own lost importance which drove him to carve out a last role for himself, by making use of the information he had surreptitiously acquired before leaving Philby's hospitable roof in Washington. There should be a final dramatic episode, before the spent rocket fizzled out. He was fond of literary allusions and, as he drove in a hired car to Tatsfield on the evening of 25 May 1951, one can imagine his murmuring to himself Enobarbus' words: "The loyalty well held to fools does make our faith mere folly." He, too, would "earn a place i' the story."

The arrival of Burgess was unwelcome to Melinda Maclean. She had prepared a special supper to celebrate Donald's thirty-eighth birthday and was not anxious to share it with this stranger, whom Donald introduced as "Roger Styles." Worse was to follow, as both men insisted they must leave almost immediately and the supper was scarcely touched. It looked to Melinda, as she later told my wife, as if Donald was off on a drunken spree with a homosexual friend. That she knew nothing of their real plans is amply attested by the fact that it was she who gave the alarm on Monday morning by ringing up the Foreign Office to enquire whether Donald had turned up for work.

He had left her at a moment of acute difficulty. She was expecting her third child in mid-June; a mortgage payment on the house was due shortly; with Donald's disappearance his pay stopped and his bank would advance no money. Mrs Dunbar came to the rescue, as she had done before. She had never liked Donald; but she shared her daughter's bewilderment about what had become of him. She understood some of the reasons for Foreign Office suspicions. But she resented the fact that Melinda's friends in the Service had abruptly ceased to communicate with her, despite their earlier insistence that only her return to live with Donald would save him and his career. This grievance came to my ears through George Middleton (Head of Personnel Department), and early in June my wife and I went down to Tatsfield. I can date the visit by the fact that Melinda had not yet given birth to her daughter; indeed she was dreading her confinement in a London hospital because she would be even more exposed to the attentions of the Press than she was in "Beaconshaw."

We arrived to find the house virtually under siege. The gate leading into the drive had been barricaded and we had to leave the car in the road. All the downstairs windows were curtained to exclude Press photographers. Nobody answered the bell and we were only admitted after Fergus (who was nearly seven) had seen us from an upstairs window. Persecution by the Press was one of the reasons that later led Melinda to move to Switzerland. Beaverbrook newspapers were especially persistent, because of Lord Beaverbrook's vendetta against the Foreign Office. Fergus was accosted by reporters on his way to the local school, and a girl employed by Melinda to look after the children was offered £100 for any relevant document or photograph on which she might be able to lay her hand. Quite apart from this harassment, Melinda was deeply despondent. She had had a typed communication, which from internal evidence seemed to be from Donald, though not signed by him; she could not yet be sure that he was alive. It was not until August that he sent £2,000 to Mrs Dunbar through a Swiss bank. By that date Melinda was coming round to the idea that he must be behind the Iron Curtain. But that she was in any way a party to his defection can be entirely excluded.

THE FOREIGN OFFICE has naturally come under severe criticism for having appointed Donald Maclean Head of the American Department in November 1950. The timing was certainly unfortunate. If the appointment had been deferred for a few months, the weight of the evidence accumulating against him would have precluded it. In spite of all that had happened in Cairo, however, he still had a stock of credit over from better days. He had had nearly six months sick leave, and regulations required that he be either employed or relegated to half-pay. On half-pay he could not provide a home for his wife and two children. Melinda had left him after the Cairo débâcle, but friends had been working to bring them together again; a compassionate Personnel Department decided to take a chance on his rehabilitation. He had asked for a home posting and the headship of the American Department was vacant.

The Department at that time comprised two sections; one dealt with the USA, but not with the important economic work, arising from the European Recovery Programme (Marshall Aid). The other section, of which I was in charge, dealt with Latin America.

After Maclean's disappearance, Ministers were at pains to assure the House of Commons that

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his post had not been one of great importance. The fact remains, however, that his post entitled him to receive a wide distribution of telegrams to and from Missions abroad, as well as secret material circulated in boxes, of which keys were held by Heads of Department and their seniors. No doubt, once suspicion against Maclean had hardened, he would have received only a meagre supply of boxes, sparsely filled. But to have withdrawn his key would only have put him on his guard at a time when it was hoped to catch him red-handed. Whatever precautions were taken, important sources of information remained open to him. After he had absconded, when I succeeded to the post, I found in the filing cabinet reserved for the Head of Department a numbered copy of the Cabinet paper containing Prime Minister Attlee's account of his hasty visit to President Truman in December 1950, the aim of which was to ensure that General MacArthur should not be permitted to use the atom bomb in the Korean War.

SURPRISING NUMBERS of people have claimed, in retrospect, to have been on the receiving end of anti-American remarks made around this time by Maclean. Presumably these remarks were made in the Gargoyle Club and other places where he went to drink in the evening. In the office he was discreet. I recall only one strong criticism of American policy. One afternoon over a cup of tea he condemned MacArthur's folly in carrying his pursuit of the enemy as far as the Yalu River on the Chinese border. It was a comment many of us might have made without being suspected of Communist leanings.

Although his office hours were less regular and working late was a thing of the past, Maclean continued to discharge his day-to-day duties conscientiously. The fact that he did so up to the last moment suggests that his double life had induced in him something of a split mind. I was on leave during his last week at work. After my return, I found in Maclean's sloping script a concise and accurate record of a visit paid to him on 25 May by the Argentine Minister-Counsellor, who had raised an intricate point connected with current trade negotiations. At that juncture in Maclean's affairs this meticulous record could do nothing to salvage his career or throw pursuers off the scent. It was the action of a man whose good habits are as deeply ingrained as the bad.

The security forces have been criticised for not having kept Maclean under surveillance at Tatsfield. The only advantage of doing so would have been that they could have confirmed on the night of Friday 25 May, that he had gone, instead of having to wait till Monday. Even if he had been followed to Southampton, it would not have been possible to detain him; no warrant was out for his arrest. In a country where the rule of law prevails, the security forces are denied certain advantages available to the *KGB*. Circumstantial evidence of espionage may be strong, but conclusive proof requires that the suspect be caught in the act of conveying classified information to someone not entitled to receive it.

With the defection of Maclean and Burgess their usefulness to the Russians ceased. Whatever information they may have carried in their heads would very soon have lost its value. The main damage was, of course, to Anglo-American relations and, in particular, to confidence between the counter-espionage services of the two countries. This was a bonus for the *KGB*, which partly compensated for the neutralisation of their principal agent, Kim Philby, who was wholly discredited in Washington and partly in London. The flight of the two defectors had a lasting effect upon the Foreign Service (as it was still called). Some of the changes that took place would in any case have come about in due course with the expansion of the Service, which could no longer be run as a "family concern", whose members felt obliged to cover up for one another's shortcomings, while taking for granted their fundamental loyalty. Sir Ronald Campbell may have been lax in reporting Donald Maclean's gross misdemeanours in Cairo, but certain Heads of Mission of a subsequent era derived all too much satisfaction from ferreting out and meticulously recording the minor failings of their staff. The Service became more disciplined. It did not become happier. For those who had known it before May 1951 it would never—for better or for worse—be quite the same again.

I WAS AGAIN SERVING in the Foreign Office in the spring of 1962, when it was rumoured that Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess were planning a visit to Britain.[3] A Superintendent from Scotland Yard came to see me to assure himself that, if necessary, I could formally testify to the

[3] This whole problem is the dénouement of Alan Bennett's new play, *The Old Country*, starring Sir Alec Guinness, now playing in London.

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fact that Maclean had had access to classified information. In the course of conversation it emerged that the prospect of the renegades' return aroused no enthusiasm in Scotland Yard, because of the difficulty of securing a conviction on a major charge. What we know and what the law accepts as proof are, in a free society, two different things.

The principle has its merits as well as its drawbacks. Burgess is dead; but perhaps Philby and Maclean sometimes reflect upon it, as they beguile with vodka the long hours in the arid unintellectual climate of Moscow.

AUTHORS

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Michael Josselson spent some ten years researching his epic "Tolstoyan" theme of the life of Barclay de Tolly, one of Russia's (and Scotland's) greatest field-marshals; and he discovered much new source-material in Russian, German, and French archives. He was born in Lithuania (as was Prince Barclay), was educated in Berlin and Paris, and was a US officer in World War II. His cultural work in post-war Germany, where he worked together with such figures as Furtwängler, Gründgens, Fehling, was memorable; and for almost two decades he was associated with the Congress for Cultural Freedom where his energies did so much to maintain such diversely critical journals as *Preuves* (edited by François Bondy in Paris), *Der Monat* (edited by M. J. Lasky and Hellmut Jaesrich in Berlin), *Forum* (edited by Friedrich Torberg in Vienna), and *Tempo Presente* (edited by Ignazio Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte in Rome). He was a great and persevering friend of ENCOUNTER from its first days under the founding editorship of Stephen Spender and Irving Kristol. Shortly after completing his book-length manuscript (in collaboration with his wife, Diana Dodge), and personally delivering the text of his article to ENCOUNTER, he died in Geneva on 7 January this year, aged 69. No one who knew him will ever forget his remarkable virtues: intellectual integrity, cosmopolitan culture, heartwarming loyalty. "... *This was a man!*"

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Guido Almansi is Professor of English and Comparative Literature, University of East Anglia. His books include *L'Estetica dell'Osceno* (Einaudi, 1974), *The Writer as Liar* (Routledge, 1975), and a critical study of *Montale* (Edinburgh University Press, 1977) of which he is co-author.

James Fenton is Political Correspondent of the *New Statesman*. A volume of his poetry, *Terminal Moraine*, was published in 1972 (Secker).

D. J. Enright is a poet, literary critic, and novelist, and has held various Chairs of English Literature abroad. He was from 1970–72 co-editor of ENCOUNTER, and is now a director of Chatto & Windus, who published his latest collection of poems, *Sad Ires & Others*, in 1975, and a novel for children, *The Joke Shop*, in 1976; the sequel, *Wild Ghost Chase*, will appear this spring.

Jan Morris has three books due for publication this spring: *The Oxford Book of Oxford*, a new edition of her own *Oxford* (both OUP), and (writing as James Morris) *Farewell the Trumpets*, the final volume of the Pax Britannica trilogy on the Victorian Empire (Faber).

Leo Labedz is editor of *Survey* (a London quarterly). He edited the standard volume on *Revisionism* (1963), and *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentry Record* (Penguin, 1972). Among his articles in ENCOUNTER are "Raymond Aron's 'Vindication'" (September 1977), and "Shadows Over Helsinki" (June 1973).

THE SECOND Israel Sieff Memorial Lecture, delivered by **Roy Jenkins**, which appeared in the February issue of ENCOUNTER, was organised by PEP in conjunction with Marks & Spencer, Ltd. It is now available in pamphlet form from PEP (12 Upper Belgrave Street, London S.W.1) at 50p., including postage and packing.

"Down With The Alphabet!" is based on a text by the German satirical writer **Jan Cattepoel.**

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Richard Pipes

Mr X Revises

A Reply to George F. Kennan

GEORGE KENNAN advances four related propositions.

(1) Since Stalin's death, the Soviet Union has undergone changes of great magnitude, and, although it still retains certain traditional features, including an "authoritarian" system of government, the fact of it being directed by a "moderate" man, "confidently regarded by all who know him as a man of peace" creates conditions favourable to a steady improvement of American-Soviet relations.

(2) A mischievous but very influential "Right" opposition in the United States, composed of "military enthusiasts", ignores these changes, and, obsessed with an alleged Soviet military threat, "harasses" those in and out of government who seek to broaden the area of collaboration between the two countries.

(3) This "harassment" imperils the evolution of peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, and may, in the end, compel the latter to "look for alternatives other than those of good relations with the United States."

(4) The time is opportune for representatives of the two opposing schools of thought on American-Soviet relations to sit down together and work out a "consensus."

I appreciate Mr Kennan's deeply felt concern. I admire his intelligence and knowledge: unlike many of his persuasion who aggressively flaunt their ignorance of Russian history as a complicating and irrelevant factor, he has read deeply in it. For these reasons I hesitate to take issue with him. I nevertheless do so because I believe all of his propositions, except the last one, to be wrong in the logical as well as political meanings of the word.

THE SOVIET UNION HAS indisputably "changed" since Stalin's death—is there a country in the world that has remained static during the past quarter of a century? But to an historian and political scientist the word "change" conveys something more than mere fluctuations in the political climate, external appearance, and even direction of national policy. It involves, first and foremost, transformations in the basic *institutions* of state and society. In answer to the question: "Has a given state and society changed?" one will want to know what, if anything, of significance has happened to affect the relationship of the government to the country's citizenry and resources—to alter the procedures by means of which government personnel is selected, state policies are determined, and economic wealth is produced and disposed of.

In the case of the Soviet Union, meaningful change would require the introduction of some, even modest, procedures by means of which the population could influence the selection of the Communist Party's directing personnel and their conduct of national affairs. It would provide ordinary citizens with devices to bring to account state officials (including those of the security services) guilty of abusing their authority. It would entail some relaxation of the state's monopoly on the country's economic resources, as expressed in the expansion of the peasantry's land allotments (e.g., to the extent that this is

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practiced in Poland) and in the granting to industrial labour of the right lawfully to strive for higher wages and better working conditions. Any innovations of this nature would constitute "change" in a sense in which the term has meaning for the historian and political scientist. A package of them would indeed attest to a profound internal transformation of the Soviet system, a new Soviet Russia in the making.

I SUBMIT that, unfortunately, no such innovations have occurred. In 1978, the central institutions of the Soviet state remain what they were in Stalin's day, and, for that matter, they are not all that different from the ones Lenin had created in 1917–18, when he gave shape to Communist Russia.

That state is *still* run by a body of men whom no one has ever elected to office and who perpetuate themselves by the device of cooptation. Their power remains absolute, subject neither to constitutional restraints nor to control by popular representatives (in any sense that does not make mockery of these concepts). Neither the state nor its officials can be held accountable for abuses. There exist no restraints on the power of the security services *vis-à-vis* ordinary citizens. The self-appointed élite still controls virtually all of the productive wealth of the country, investing it and disposing of it at will. It continues to be the country's sole employer, and, as such, it is still in a position to render any citizen unemployed and unemployable. The peasants still do not own their land or its produce (save for what they grow on their minuscule private plots). Workmen still cannot strike.

This being the case, it seems entirely inappropriate to speak of "changes" of any magnitude having occurred in the Soviet Union since 1953. The critical fact is not that, in contrast to the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet Union of the 1970s is directed by a man of moderation and peaceful intent (a questionable proposition at best, but let it stand here for argument's sake). The critical fact is precisely the one that Mr Kennan disposes of in one casual sentence, namely that the Soviet Union remains an "authoritarian" régime, and that it is such in the very broadest sense of the term.

Mr Brezhnev is mortal. As Russia is now constituted, there exist no guarantees whatever that his successor, for the selection of whom there are no established procedures, will not turn out to be a man with a very different temperament and predilections. And this man will have at his disposal the whole machinery of internal repression and external aggression which Stalin had left behind at his death—if anything, larger in size and technically vastly improved. Surely we cannot be asked completely to reorient our foreign policy and mortgage our national security to the vagaries of succession in the Soviet Union, given that the underlying institutions of that country remain in all essential respects as they had been under what Mr Kennan calls Stalin's "ruthless and far-reaching despotism."

I AM SURPRISED that Mr Kennan should equate present-day Soviet "authoritarianism" with that of pre-Revolutionary Russia. I happen strongly to believe that the roots of the Soviet régime reach deep into Russian history, especially that of the pre-Petrine era. Nevertheless, I do not see how one can ignore the profound differences between pre-1917 and post-1917 Russian "authoritarianism."

Pre-1917 Russia was a constitutional monarchy with a parliament (a very imperfect one, to be sure) and an independent judiciary. In that Russia the peasant owned the land he tilled as well as the produce which he extracted from it; and the worker was legally entitled to organise and to strike. Imperial Russia in the last sixty years of its existence had in fact undergone such fundamental institutional changes as I have specified above, inasmuch as in the course of that period it had evolved from a serf-owning society ruled by an unlimited autocrat and without a separate judiciary into a quasi-parliamentary constitutional state in which there no longer was serfdom but there were irremovable judges. No comparable evolution has occurred in the Soviet Union during the past sixty years. Such changes as are visible there affect only the political climate: and these are no more trustworthy guidelines for the future than the often dramatic changes that in Imperial Russia had accompanied the succession from one monarch to another, say from Paul I to Alexander I, or from Alexander I to Nicholas I.

IN TAKING THE DEATH OF Stalin as his benchmark for measuring progress, Mr Kennan is choosing the date most favourable to his case.

Suppose, however, that instead of comparing today's Russia with that of twenty-five years ago, he compared it with that of fifty years ago, when the New Economic Policy was at its height. In

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every respect Soviet Russia of that time was freer and more conciliatory in its foreign policy than it had been immediately before or than it is today. The basic institutions of the state, however, had not changed since the period of War Communism; and a year or two later Stalin showed the world how quickly policies can be reversed when the mechanism of control remains intact. Incidentally, most of the arguments advanced by Mr Kennan about the evolving nature of the Soviet régime were first articulated by Russian émigrés in the 1920s, following the introduction of NEP. If Mr Kennan were to reread the writings of the 1920s by Ekaterina Kuskova, Paul Miliukov, and other proponents of the thesis of the Soviet "Thermidor", and then reflect on their demonstrated fallacy, he might feel less confident of his own predictions.

THOSE OF US WHO INSIST on looking at the underlying institutions and structures see none of the profound changes which Mr Kennan places at the base of his policy recommendations. And for this reason we are troubled by what we perceive to be a relentless growth of Soviet military capabilities, far beyond what seem to us the country's legitimate defence needs. I believe that the facts of this military expansion are not generally in dispute. The disagreement revolves around two corollary questions:

(1) What are the reasons behind it—is it self-generated or is it a reaction to American initiatives?

(2) What are its implications—does it or does it not pose a serious threat to US and Western security?

I can see legitimate arguments being made on both sides of the debate. I cannot concede, however, that those who take the position that the Soviet military effort is self-generated and threatening are men of the "Right" and "military enthusiasts." There is nothing "Right" about concern with an effective defence. In 1938–39 it was the liberal President of the United States who was pressing, against conservative opposition, for defence appropriations. Today, the leading Russian dissidents, among them Andrei Sakharov, the Nobel Laureate for Peace, men who have given proof of their dedication to liberal and democratic values not only in words but by risking their careers and even lives, warn the West of the pitfalls of "*détente*" and military weakness. And, of course, no one is more vociferous on behalf of a strong Western military stance than the government of the People's Republic of China, which can be labelled "Right" only at the risk of depriving this word of any meaning. As for calling a "military enthusiast" a person who worries about another party's military threat, it strikes me as very perverse: one could just as well call Jeremiah a "doomsday enthusiast."

Mr Kennan has no patience with the complexities of the military balance. He confesses to an inability even to understand those who occupy themselves with what he calls "letters and numbers of various weapons systems", "their reputed capabilities", and their "interactions . . . in situations of actual hostility." The statement renders me speechless. Unless Mr Kennan were to profess pacifism and on principle refuse to respond to force with force—a cause he does not seem to advocate—then how can he urge that we ignore instruments of destruction targeted on our cities, industries, and military establishment? And how does he reconcile his perception of the Soviet leadership as rational with the indisputable fact that it pays enormous attention to and expends vast sums of money on matters which he considers irrational and even irrelevant?

IF MR KENNAN DESIRES A CONSENSUS on these questions he simply must start taking seriously the views of those who are concerned with Soviet weapons' developments and see in them indicators of Soviet intentions.

In the past several years, a number of specialists have raised questions about the dominant United States strategic doctrine (which Mr Kennan seems to share in an extreme formulation) that there can be no victor in nuclear war and hence that the whole issue of "nuclear superiority" is meaningless. Mr Paul Nitze, an accomplished expert in these matters, has argued at length the possibility of the present US second (retaliatory) strike capability being neutralised by Soviet advances in weaponry. Mr T. K. Jones has shown, in part experimentally, that Soviet civil defence measures are able greatly to limit Soviet human and material losses in the event of a nuclear war. Mr Edward Luttwak has analysed the pitfalls of the SALT process. I myself have called attention to the war-fighting and war-winning elements in Soviet nuclear doctrine.

Let me assure Mr Kennan that these arguments have not found a response so far. Those who share his views have rather preferred to ignore them. The most common reaction to those who address

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themselves to the realities of the military threat is to raise questions about their putative motives and even sanity. Thus, for instance, Professor George Kistiakowsky in a recent article saw fit collectively to describe all who happen to hold views on strategic matters different from his own as "paranoiacs."

It is for this reason that feelings have grown so intense and a climate of opinion has been created which makes it nearly impossible to arrive at a rational consensus on defence policy. Mr Kennan is too much of a gentleman to scorn, let alone abuse those with whom he disagrees. And yet even his remarks reveal an ill-concealed impatience with those of his compatriots who for cogently stated reasons occupy themselves with the strategic balance. If he took them and their arguments half seriously he would be bound to conclude that what they are doing is not "harassment" of the administration, but the exercise of their citizen's duty to speak up when they believe the country to be pursuing a dangerous course. I do not suppose that Mr Kennan would say of the opponents of America's involvement in Vietnam that they "harassed" the Nixon administration and bewail the fact that they had virtually compelled the United States to withdraw from there. And yet these opponents of the then US policy often engaged in physical violence, whereas critics of America's current defence policy confine themselves to argument. Apparently, "harassment", too, is in the eye of the beholder.

There is no evidence either in past Soviet behaviour or in current Soviet literature to indicate that an effective American and NATO response to its military initiatives would lead the Soviet Union to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy. Admittedly, anyone who has dealings with Soviet diplomats of both the official and unofficial varieties is familiar with "confidential" warnings to this effect; but I find it difficult to believe that a person of Mr Kennan's experience in these matters could be taken in by such transparent tactics of influencing American and European public opinion.

But then I also do not share Mr Kennan's view of current Soviet foreign policy as conservative and pacific. I cannot understand how these terms can be applied to a government which under Mr Brezhnev's leadership has invaded Czechoslovakia, threatened to invade China and Romania, conspired twice with Egypt and Syria to attack Israel, assisted North Viet Nam to conquer South Viet Nam and a pro-Soviet government to seize Angola, and today feeds the flames of war between Somalia and Ethiopia.

While the perils of a strong American and European defence stance on international relations are questionable, those of a weak one appear to me very real. Perhaps the worst of these, from a political point of view, is the possibility that it may drive the Chinese to seek a *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union. The Chinese leadership makes no secret of what it thinks of Soviet capabilities and intentions, and how worried it is about what it perceives to be the unwillingness of the West to match them. Should it conclude that the United States is not a reliable ally against the Soviet striving for "hegemony", then the option of a *rapprochement* with the USSR will almost certainly come to the fore in China and find supporters there.

I consider this threat to be much more genuine than Russia's possible abandonment of *détente*, and far more dangerous in its implications. There is no historic evidence to suggest that the Soviet government responds to toughness with toughness, and to conciliation with conciliation. The only time in its history that the Soviet Union may be said to have appeased another power was in 1939–41 in its relations with Hitler. I do not recall it reciprocating President Roosevelt's conciliatory policies in the latter stages of World War II.

ALL THESE ARE complicated and grave issues. A meeting of minds is clearly in order: a consensus may or may not emerge from it, but at least the two schools of thought, presently snarling at one another, will learn better to understand, and, we hope to respect each other's point of view. But this surely calls for a genuine dialogue. The rules of the discourse cannot be drawn up as Mr Kennan proposes, namely by agreeing "to lay aside completely [!], at least for the moment and for purposes of this exercise, the whole question of the military relationship" in order to concentrate on the "real nature and situation" in the Soviet Union.

A debate between two parties, one of which regards the military relationship as crucial to the understanding of the "real nature and situation" of the Soviet Union, cannot begin by placing this topic out of bounds. If those who share my views are to be drawn into a discussion of present-day Soviet society and its evolution, then those who share Mr Kennan's opinions will have to suffer through instruction about the strategic balance and the relationship between the Soviet military drive and Soviet intentions.

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L. P. Wilkinson

From the Point of View of Antiquity

Classical Approaches

I. Population & Family Planning

WHAT FROM A classicist might be interesting and unfamiliar to a general audience? It occurred to me that there were certain topics much canvassed today whose anticipations in ancient Greece and Rome were too little known, even perhaps in classical circles, partly because only recent relaxations in our social conventions have made public ventilation of such things fully possible. I hope that I was right in my supposition; and I trust and believe that if I speak freely no one will take offence.

In this first article, when I speak of population I shall not be concerned with the vexed question of figures, and the extent to which they can be deduced for antiquity, but only with Greek and Roman attitudes to the subject, which did sometimes affect political theory, practical policy, and private family planning.

The spectre of global overpopulation does not seem to have been in the forefront of men's minds until quite recently. Of course anxiety about population in general terms was sparked off by Malthus' essay of 1798; and it haunts such books as J. S. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). But people were mainly concerned about the particular society to which they belonged. I was therefore surprised to find John Addington Symonds writing in 1891 of "our age, when the habitable portions of the globe are rapidly becoming overcrowded. . . ." The expansion has notoriously become an explosion since the wholesale export to underdeveloped countries of the benefits of Western progress in medicine and hygiene, through the agency of the international health organisations that came into being with the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations. The concomitant acceptance by the more prosperous nations of at least some measure of responsibility for feeding the famished millions has increased awareness that we are "One World."

Yet I think F. L. Lucas was justified when he wrote, only some sixteen years ago, of what he called "The Greatest Problem of Today" as being "chastely avoided by the popular press." Pope Paul VI, addressing the United Nations as lately as 1965, gave as his message: "Your task is so to labour that bread will be sufficiently abundant at the table of humanity, and not unreasonably[1] to favour an artificial control of birth in order to reduce the number of guests at the banquet of life." But is it only a matter of bread? It was calculated not long ago that, if the present increase in proliferation were unchecked, there would be in 600 years' time very little standing room for each human being. Yet even the alarming, some would say, alarmist, manifesto

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[1] "Unreasonably", in this official translation, might suggest that artificial control of birth is all right "within reason." The original French text reads, *"un contrôle artificiel, des naissances, qui serait irrationel."* *Acta Apostolica*, 1965.

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issued by a group of scientists in 1972 entitled "A Blueprint for Survival" seems to have created little more than a temporary stir.

IN ANTIQUITY THERE IS ONE very early reference to global overpopulation. It occurs in the exordium salvaged from the lost 6th- (or 7th-) century epic called the *Cypria*, which was composed to cover the Tale of Troy up to the events described in the *Iliad*. The *Iliad* opens with a description of the slaughter caused by the wrath of Achilles and adds parenthetically: "It was the will of Zeus that was being fulfilled." By the time the *Cypria* was composed men had begun to demand that gods should not be less moral than mortals. So to justify the ways of Homer's Zeus to men the author attributed to him the motive of pity: he stirred up the Trojan War to relieve the world of overpopulation. This fantastic idea obtained sufficient currency in literary tradition to be twice echoed by Euripides. More importantly, enlarged to include all causes of mass death, it figured in the theodicy of the Stoic Chrysippus. And from the providential Zeus of the Stoics it was transferred to the Christian God by Tertullian, with more immediate reference to an existing situation. Writing about A.D. 200 in North Africa, a province with an exceptional and expanding amount of population, he said:

> "Our numbers are burdensome to the world, which can hardly supply us from its natural elements. . . . Pestilence, famine, war and earthquakes should be regarded as a remedy for the nations, a means of pruning the luxuriance of the human race."

But both in ancient and in modern times discussion of population has primarily been in terms of individual states. The Nation-states of modern Europe assumed for centuries that an increase in population was a good thing, simply for the sake of competitive power. Machiavelli urged the idea, and the French legislation of Colbert in 1664 embodied it; and there were Old Testament texts to encourage it. "Increase and multiply and replenish the earth." In our own times Mussolini and Hitler awarded prizes for large families; and the Japanese war-lords in 1939 banned birth-control, aiming to have a population of 100,000,000 by 1960. I say nothing of General de Gaulle. But these were by now aberrations. What sober people have become concerned about is the *optimum* population for their country, and whether there should be a government policy about it. In "A Blueprint for Survival" the optimum population for Britain was estimated to be 30,000,000. Discussion in terms of economics, agriculture and imports of food has been overtaken by discussion about the environment and the quality of life. Thus high-rise buildings originated in anxiety about the supply of development land: now we worry about their psychological effect. The Conservation Society debates whether its main concern is birth-control or amenities; in the long run the latter may depend on the former.

IN ANCIENT GREECE the problem arose as soon as the more settled conditions of the 8th century B.C. permitted population to grow in a Malthusian way. The small, mountain-locked states soon became unable to support themselves. At first colonisation provided an outlet. This continued until the 6th century, after which there was opposition in the West from the Carthaginians, Etruscans, and Illyrians; and the suitable sites around the Aegean Sea were all occupied. Cities then began to grow, and to produce goods, with the help of captured slaves, partly in order to pay for the corn they now had to import.

This was especially so in Athens, the state about which we know most. In the 50 years following the Persian Wars she paid for corn for her growing population by the export of oil and the pottery that held it, though even more by the tribute of her empire and by the silver from her mines at Laurium. But the slaves themselves had to be fed; she lost her empire in the Peloponnesian War; and the silver mines gave out. In 346 we find the Athenian publicist Isocrates appealing to Philip of Macedon to lead a pan-Hellenic crusade of conquest against Persia, so as not only to unite Greece, but also to provide an outlet for her surplus population, which had turned to banditry. The conquests of Philip's son Alexander the Great were to implement his policy for a while.

In these circumstances people had begun to think about *optimum* population for their states, towards the end of the colonising period. We hear that Phidon of Corinth aimed at keeping the number of families and of citizens static, while Philolaus laid down for Thebes laws about procreation intended to keep the number of lots of land the same. It is unfortunate that we do not know what measures they adopted. When theorists began to devise ideal states, they addressed themselves to the problem with an eye to the quality of life for a leisured class. Plato in

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his *Republic*, having abolished marriage at least for his élite of guardians, provided that sexual intercourse among them should be regulated by the rulers in such a way as to keep the population stable, taking account of probable losses through war, disease, etc.[2]

In the less revolutionary-utopian work of his old age, the *Laws*, he restored the institution of marriage; but the rearing of families was still to be governed by the interests of the state. He fixed on 5,040 as a suitable number of plot-holders (perhaps as a number which conveniently happened to be divisible by every factor from 2 to 12 except 11). For stability's sake this number must remain the same for ever. Each plot-holder must leave a single male heir, surrendering any further sons for adoption by the sonless, and marrying off his daughters. (Plato omits to make any provision about family planning for the subservient classes. As regards the number of plot-holders they were irrelevant; but as mouths to feed they certainly were not.)

ARISTOTLE, in his critique of Plato's *Laws*, considers 5,040 plot-holders far too many, in view of the women and retainers who must be added. He also considers Plato far too sanguine in assuming here that population will be kept stable by an automatic balance between sterile and over-fertile marriages, a problem that would not have arisen in his marriage-less *Republic*. In fact, Aristotle says, failure to control the size of the population is a constant cause of poverty in states, and so of crime and rebellion. Numbers should be regulated by calculating the chances of mortality in children and of sterility in marriage (easier said than done before the age of statistics). A state should be large enough to be self-sufficient, but small enough to be easily comprehended. Here he puts his finger on what it was that made the city-state viable in human terms.

But of course states had to breed a sufficient number of soldiers; and we hear more, in troubled times, of underpopulation than of overpopulation. This was especially true of Sparta, where the "Spartiate" élite had to hold down a much larger subject population. In the 5th century (possibly as a result of a devastating earthquake in 465, but more probably owing to a process of social erosion) she became worried about her manpower. At all events we know that at some time she introduced severe penalties for celibates as well as rewards for child-bearing. She was seriously concerned even about the loss of the 124 Spartiates trapped by the Athenians on the island of Sphacteria in 424. By the time of her débâcle at Leuctra in 371 she had only 1,000 of these; whereas Aristotle calculated that her territory could have maintained 30,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry. Unwillingness to breed because of a decadent obsession with personal wealth seemed to be the chief cause. Nor was there, as in Athens, a strong religious cult of ancestors to motivate perpetuation of the family.

PERICLES, in his funeral oration of 430 B.C. in Thucydides, impressed on the bereaved parents of Athens their duty to breed more sons to replace the dead; and emergency husband-sharing is said to have been introduced for this purpose after the Sicilian disaster of 413. Nevertheless in the world of the 4th-century Attic Orators families even of five children are not uncommon. It may be that, before what we call the Hellenistic Age (the two centuries following the death of Alexander in 323), only the really poor had to resort to extreme measures of family restriction. The sense of solidarity, pride, and communal purpose that characterised the independent city-state was still operative.

Aristotle was concerned only about *over*population in a limited city-state. He gave no thought to the possibility of *under*population in larger communities. But his pupil Alexander's conquests emasculated the city-states and weakened their patriotic spirit. Perhaps for this reason there was, by the 2nd century B.C., widespread *under*population in Greece.[3] The historian Polybius deplored this. People were reluctant to marry, or at least to rear children. If they reared any, it was only one or two, who might easily die early and so extinguish the family. He ascribed this to selfishness and indolence, and to a desire to give one's children too high a standard of living. But it may equally well have been due to demoralisation and reluctance to bring children

[2] At II 372 Plato says that citizens must not beget offspring beyond their means, lest they fall into poverty or war. But he seems to accept it as inevitable that, with the expected rise in the standard of living, there will be predatory conquests which will require a professional army both for aggression and defence. It is in this context, indeed, that his "guardians" are first mentioned (II 374).

[3] That this continued into the time of Augustus, in spite of comparative freedom from wars and epidemics under the Pax Romana, is clear from the geographer Strabo's account of various districts. It was still true in the time of Plutarch (*c.* A.D. 100). Athens, however, revived under Rome, and Egypt and the Middle East were populous and prosperous.

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into a world of incessant war, revolution, banditry and violence in general, with a high chance of poverty, enslavement or early death. And if it is true that Aemilius Paullus, after defeating King Perseus of Macedon at Pydna in 167, carried off 150,000 into slavery from the region of Epirus alone, there we have an example of one cause of depopulation, and of demoralisation among the remnants.

THE ROMANS were from early times an ambitious and expansive people. Their word "*proletarii*" means "breeders." Traditions about measures designed to increase the population that had been enacted in the good old days were current in the late Republic. Cicero embodied these measures in his idealising work *On the Laws*. Even if they were apocryphal, or in abeyance, the belief in them is evidence of contemporary anxiety about population. The measures mooted from the time of the Gracchi (in the late 2nd century B.C.) and onwards for founding colonies overseas and settling surplus population on the land in Italy had mainly to do with the unemployed in the Capital, who had otherwise to be kept alive by corn subsidies: they do not indicate citizen overpopulation in general. On the land, slaves had been taking the place of citizens; and, in the city, the all-important upper classes were breeding less. In 131 B.C. the censor Metellus Macedonicus made a speech to the Senate *On Increasing Offspring* in which he seems to have advocated making marriage compulsory. Cicero in his speech *Pro Marcello* urged upon the dictator Caesar the need to encourage reproduction.

And finally Augustus, who had Metellus' old speech read out in the Senate, introduced legislation penalising celibates and childless couples and giving privileges to those who had three children. In his time the problem had been aggravated by the number of deaths caused by the Civil Wars. That it was not merely the ruling class whose birth-rate Augustus wished to stimulate is shown by his offering privileges for child-bearing even to freedwomen, though they had to produce four. The Elder Pliny tells of a freedman from Fiesole who was given the reward of processing to the Capitol with his eight children, 27 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. Augustus' measures, though they provoked strong reactions and apparently remained ineffective, were still hopefully re-enacted by other emperors for three centuries.

Yet even three surviving children per family would have been insufficient to maintain the population, given the prevailing death-rate. Infant mortality in antiquity has been estimated at ten times that for England today; and adults also died on average much younger. The two Gracchi, for instance, with one sister, were the only survivors to maturity of twelve siblings. Yet even so, private birth control must always have been a major factor in determining population. This fact has been obscured by the natural reticence which inhibits people from talking about such subjects as infanticide, abortion, and contraception, especially as regards themselves personally, an inhibition indicated by the use of euphemisms, such as the Greek *apothesis* ("disposal"), for the exposure of babies (like our phrase "putting down" for killing pets).

AS A TRANSITION to the subject of Family Planning it will be convenient here to consider eugenics. Positive eugenics, the mating of suitable persons to produce a superior breed (such as was attempted to some extent in Hitler's Nazi *SS*), were prescribed by Plato in the *Republic*. To prevent heart-burning, the selection of participants was to be disguised by a faked ballot. Both Plato and Aristotle provided in their ideal states that parents should breed only when in their prime. Plato puts this for women at from 20 to 40 years of age, for men from the end of their prowess at racing until 50 (just like stud horses). Aristotle wished women to marry at 18, men at 37: then they were in the prime of life respectively, and the decline in the powers of both would coincide.

In Sparta, we are told, positive eugenics were put into practice. An elderly man with a young wife might introduce to her some handsome young man, and adopt the resultant offspring; or a worthy man who admired some woman for the fine children she had borne might obtain her husband's permission to beget children for himself on her. Spartans thought it illogical of other peoples to breed horses and dogs eugenically, but to keep wives jealously under one individual's lock and key. The physical training of Spartan girls was intended to enable them to produce strong boys.

Plato also proposed negative eugenics. The

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worst should cohabit with the worst in as few cases as possible, and their offspring should be made to disappear in some obscure unmentioned place (note the euphemisms), as should any defective offspring of superior parents. Aristotle, too, prescribed that no defective child should be reared. This was common form in antiquity. In Sparta new-born babies were brought by their parents to the elders of their tribe; and if these judged them unpromising, they were thrown into a chasm near the foot of Mount Taÿgetus. At Rome the early code of law called the Twelve Tables enjoined the suppression of abnormal babies—the very abnormal were regarded with horror as portents from the gods. Even the gentle Seneca remarks casually: "Monstrous offspring we suppress, and we drown infants that are weakly or abnormal." Of course, to some extent the suppression of the deformed was an act of mercy. (A doctor recently made bold to state publicly that he had on occasion, with the parents' consent, not assisted a child born with *spina bifida* to live, and recommended that this should be standard practice.)

BUT NEGATIVE EUGENICS APART, what do we know of family planning in antiquity, and how it was attempted?

Though production of legitimate offspring was enjoined and generally accepted in theory as being a duty required for the survival of the state and for the maintenance of the rites of the dead, of whom you would some day be one yourself, the main considerations seem to have been personal. The earlier Greeks probably thought it would be nice in theory to have a large family, but quite unrealistic: there simply was not enough land to go round. Hesiod, about 700 B.C., is our first witness. He recommends that a farmer should rear one son only, so that the inheritance may not be divided. He had a special reason for feeling this: his poem, the *Works and Days*, professes to be motivated by a dispute with his brother Perses over the division of their inheritance, in which he thought he had been badly treated. Presumably he would have acquiesced, as a social duty, in rearing a daughter as well; and indeed, in his vivid description of winter, he does not forget to mention the tender young girl sitting cosily at the fireside. Democritus, about 400 B.C., said that while it is natural to want to beget children of your own, adoption, which allowed of choice, was more sensible. A comic poet quipped that the only thing more wretched than a man with children was a man with more children.

POVERTY WAS, according to the historian Appian, the reason why the Roman poor in the 2nd century B.C. were no longer able to rear children. But there was, as we saw, for the opposite reason, a reluctance to breed among the Roman rich as well. It began with the influx of booty and tribute in the era of conquest following the Hannibalic War. Desire to have one son and heir did persist, but less often desire to have more, in a society where the inheritance was equally shared between all sons and daughters. Inheritances were in any case much curtailed by prestige expenditure, which sumptuary laws failed to curb. Expensive

games had to be put on in the name of any son desiring a political career, and daughters required dowries commensurate to their father's status.

Meanwhile, religious belief had weakened; and with it anxiety about having no children to attend to the cult of your spirit after death. In the upper strata of society (of which we hear most) marriages were arranged alliances and were not warmly regarded as means to sexual gratification. Husbands could obtain that from the nearest attractive freedwoman or slave, or from a more permanent concubine of his own choice; and any resultant children had the status of the mother and, if they were reared at all, need never be seen, much less recognised, by their father. The highly respectable Plutarch actually advises a bride to be grateful to her husband if, out of respect for her, he works off his passions on a courtesan or slave. Wives, for their part, were emancipated, and less willing, in a sexually competitive society, to risk spoiling their beauty temporarily by pregnancies or permanently by childbirth. Pregnancy was in any case a burden, and childbirth a pain and a danger.

In such a social atmosphere it was no wonder families tended to be small. The normal ideal was something like Cicero's, one daughter and one son. If a son was born first, you might dispense with a daughter. It was noted that seven successive Domitii who became consul were only

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sons. The ultimate repudiation of the *mos maiorum* comes from Seneca of all people: "The most fatuous thing in the world," he says, "is to marry and have children in order to perpetuate one's name, or to have support in old age, or to secure that you have an heir. . . ." But perhaps that was just his rhetoric.

FAMILY PLANNING, however, was not easy, owing to the high mortality rate in the young. If you allowed for too much wastage, you might find yourself obliged to cripple the family's fortunes by divided inheritance. It was safer to offer for adoption any surplus children you might have on your hands and rely on adopting an adult yourself if eventually you were left with no heir. But you might get caught. The case of Aemilius Paullus was famous. He gave the two sons he had by his first marriage to a Fabius and a Scipio for adoption, only to see the two sons of his second marriage die in boyhood on the eve of his crowning victory at Pydna.

But, you will have been asking yourselves, if families in long periods of antiquity were so small, how did this come about? For even allowing for the high mortality rate, and for an age of marriage for men which was late by our standards,[4] uninhibited marital relations might have been expected to produce more surviving offspring. And how was it that St Augustine, in his Manichaean period, lived twelve years with a concubine yet produced only one child, conceived in the first year?

First of all we must consider the possibility of simple self-restraint. This was what Plato expected of his guardians while they were within the breeding age—with only occasional stud performances for selected sires and dams, at specially arranged festivals ("worse than monasticism", A. E. Taylor called it). Plato regarded sexual desire as a morbid condition, to be controlled and directed to expediency, not pleasure. Self-denial in sexual matters, he said, was quite practicable: indeed it was practised by Olympic athletes in training. He anticipated Dr Thomas Arnold in prescribing exercise as an antidote, with regard to young men below the age prescribed for marriage. Sexual acts of any kind outside wedlock were to be so discouraged by social disapproval that in time they would become as much taboo as incest. Failing that, he would legislate against them. This attitude is found later among some Stoics (notably Musonius Rufus in the 1st century A.D., who thought that all sexual activity not aimed at procreation was wrong). The Christian Lactantius said that anyone too poor to raise children must practise abstinence, not indulge in non-reproductive modes of sex. But where there was no religious sanction it is unlikely that such abstinence was widespread.

Non-reproductive modes of sex must not be overlooked as a possible form of birth control. Aristotle mentions, but does not pursue, the possibility that the organised homosexuality of Crete may have been intended to keep down the population, and, intention apart, it may have had that effect.[5] And in heterosexual intercourse also, oral, anal and onanistic methods may have been employed. Plato condemns what he vaguely calls "sowing the seed on stony ground where it cannot bear fruit." This subject is rarely mentioned in classical literature, partly no doubt through a natural reticence broken only by intentionally obscene writers such as Catullus and Martial. There is an odd reference, however, in Herodotus. Pisistratus, the 6th-century Athenian ruler, not wanting for particular reasons to have children by his second wife, had intercourse with her in unorthodox ways. It is a remarkable fact that *coitus interruptus*, until recent times by far the most widely used method of birth control in the West,[6] is not mentioned in classical literature in the thousand years that separate the poet Archilochus (if a recently discovered papyrus fragment is rightly attributed and interpreted) and St Augustine.

But we must beware of thinking that practices condemned by Christians were new. They may simply have been unmentioned before because they were not condemned. The preoccupation of the Talmud with them may indicate that they were something the Jewish Diaspora encountered in the Roman world. Was *coitus interruptus* so obvious a device that even writers who give comprehensive counsel on birth-control omitted it? Or was it in fact unknown (for Professor Keith

[4] Xenophon said that, since men do not marry for sexual satisfaction, it was best not to marry before thirty, when sexual desire is less keen, to avoid having too many children. Aristotle thought that girls who married too young were inconveniently demanding as to sexual intercourse.

[5] A native of New Guinea has been known to advocate it on these grounds. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex I* (1897), p. 4.

[6] Believed to have been responsible for the heavy fall in the birth-rate in France at the end of c. 18 and the beginning of c. 19. J. Peel and M. Potts, *Textbook of Contraceptive Practice* (1969), pp. 49–51.

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Hopkins has pointed out that it is unknown today in some primitive societies that practise other forms of birth control)?

There is a well-known passage in Lucretius in which he says that certain modes of intercourse promote fertility whereas others inhibit it, and ascribes to prostitutes what he called "soft motions" designed to promote the client's pleasure and to prevent conception, being careful to add that they are irrelevant to wives. But he has recourse to a metaphor (from ploughing), and it is not clear just what he has in mind. His mention of prostitutes is a reminder that the oldest profession in the world must have evolved and disseminated a mass of empirical lore on birth control, some of it perhaps quite effective.

The lore of the rhythm or safe period was also canvassed in antiquity. Soranus, the greatest ancient authority on birth control, a Greek living at Rome about A.D. 100, mistakenly advised avoidance of coitus immediately before and after menstruation. The effectiveness of so-called safe periods would be extremely difficult to check without the keeping of a careful diary and without statistics drawn from a number of cases. Anyone trying this method would have discovered by bitter experience that it is full of pitfalls, as recent research has shown.

Plato, less severe in the *Republic* than he was to show himself in the *Laws*, allows his guardians free love-making after the age-period prescribed for procreation, provided they either do not "bring to the light" anything so conceived, or dispose of it if they cannot prevent its birth. And when discussing in the *Laws* the necessity for married couples to limit the sons they support to one, he remarks that there are many methods of birth control. That passage in the *Republic* is referring euphemistically to infanticide and abortion, the methods of family planning most frequently mentioned in antiquity, to which we may now turn.

INFANTICIDE in the form of the exposure of infants was deeply rooted in Greek mythology even in legends of infant gods, from Zeus downwards, being exposed but rescued, as well as heroes and heroines. Apart from Oedipus, the most famous cases in literature were Ion (the eponymous hero of Euripides' play, which like all his plays reflects contemporary questions) and Daphnis and Chloe (in Longus' pastoral romance). What evidence is there that it was practised in historical times, apart from the eugenic provisions already mentioned (for the literary tales of foundlings *could* be merely variations on a romantic tradition)?

We know that it was authorised by the early law of Gortyn in Crete, and the only law against it that we know of, from Thebes, is probably as late as the Antonine Age. A casual reference in Plato's *Theaetetus* may be none the less significant for being a metaphor: "Let us inspect this argument and see if it is worth rearing." It is unlikely that Plato would have proposed infanticide as a regular feature of his *Republic* without comment if he and his readers had not been callous through familiarity with it; and, likewise, casual references in the comic poets give the impression that it was not an idea which would be horrifically unfamiliar to the audience. Of course it may well have been commoner in the case of the bastard offspring of slave girls and courtesans than of married couples.

For the Hellenistic Age more concrete evidence comes from inscriptions, in the form of a wholly unnatural predominance in numbers of males over females. Despite war casualties, there were usually, it appears, more males than females in antiquity. It is true that—partly because of inferiority in women's diet, partly because of deaths in childbirth made commoner by premature marriage—a female's life expectancy was 5–10 years shorter than a male's. But the preponderance requires more explanation than that, and must largely be attributed to infanticide. There is no doubt that a prejudice against daughters existed, due partly to unwillingness to pay their eventual dowry. Stobaeus collected a number of quotations that illustrate it: for instance, "Everyone, even if poor, raises a son, but even if rich, exposes a daughter." Injunctions by a departing father to a pregnant wife to rear her child if it proves to be male but not if it proves to be female, which we find in fiction in Terence and Apuleius, are paralleled from real life in a papyrus fragment.

But more telling are figures collected by Sir William Tarn of some Hellenistic families. At Delphi in the 2nd century B.C. out of 600 families only 1% reared more than one daughter. This result could only be produced artificially, for two sons occur quite often; and, in general, families were preternaturally small. Five was the biggest Tarn could find, with one exception of seven, in the Hellenistic Age. (The modern Chinese claim to have found a technique for

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diagnosing the sex of an unborn child. It was reported in 1975 that in 53 cases where a boy was identified and abortion offered this was accepted in only one, whereas in 46 cases where a girl was identified it was accepted in 29.)

In Rome the *paterfamilias* had the right to decide whether any child in his *familia* should be reared. There are some famous decisions. Augustus ordered the exposure of the daughter of his wayward granddaughter Julia; Claudius of that of his adulterous and divorced wife Urgulanilla. Tacitus alleged the non-existence of birth control among the Germans as part of their exemplary innocence, but the prohibition of infanticide by the Jews as one of their characteristic eccentricities. His moral ambivalence does not weaken the implication that the practice was common in Rome. Sir Ronald Syme has suggested that the lack of known bastards among the Roman aristocracy (or even of imputations of bastardy in the unrestrained invectives of the late Republic) is evidence that they were suppressed. But of course in many cases they could simply have sunk into the plebeian unknown. It is a curious anomaly that the word *spurius*, meaning "bastard", occurs only in post-classical Latin; yet as a proper name it is quite common from early times. (Everyone has heard of Spurius Lartius, who kept the bridge with Horatius.)

AS TO METHODS OF SUPPRESSION, though strangling, drowning and other violent methods were employed (no doubt through the agency of menials in the case of the wealthier), a reluctance actually to kill was, not unnaturally, common: exposure was less immediate. The baby simply had to be got rid of. The heart-break of the mothers is the most miserable part of the whole affair, touchingly exhibited in Creusa in Euripides' *Ion*. It might seek mitigation in fancies of pious dedication of the offspring to a god: hence perhaps the frequent choice of a temple or holy cave as the place of deposit.

In Rome there was an idea that the exposing of babies could expiate a prodigy; and on the death of the adored prince Germanicus mothers exposed their babies as a token of mourning. But often parents hoped the child would survive. Town babies were left less often in remote places haunted by beasts and birds of prey than in streets or markets; in Athens, for instance, in the Cynosarge Gymnasium, in Rome beneath a particular column near the Velabrum, where passers-by were most likely to find them. They were also left there shortly before dawn, to give them the maximum period of daylight in which to be found. They were not only provided with toys and trinkets to comfort them, if need be, in the next world, but sometimes bound with wreaths and fillets, protective charms, and placed well wrapped up in a basket or pot. Someone might be left to watch and report if the child was found, like Moses' sister in the Bible.

Though a finder's first reaction might be one of revulsion, there were some reasons why babies might actually be sought. A childless couple might simply want to bring up a child, or a woman might seek to attach a former lover by confronting him with his supposed offspring. Rearing as slaves might seem a more probable motive. We are told that Megarians in particular sought babies at Athens for this purpose. There was a certain amount of white slave traffic for the Asiatic market. In Rome, Gaius Melissus (a talented member of Maecenas' circle) had been exposed because his parents were at loggerheads, and subsequently brought up as a slave. When his mother tried to reclaim him, he preferred to remain a slave in such exalted company.

But slaves were expensive to rear; and until the Roman era of conquest came to an end, and

EIRENE (*375 B.C.*)

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with it the influx of foreign captives, it may not have been particularly profitable to do so. Another deterrent was the rule that the natural parents could reclaim their children if they could be recognised and if the children themselves consented. Those accompanying objects, even if not primarily intended to facilitate recognition, have played their part in recognition scenes in fiction from those of Euripides' Ion to Miss Prism's handbag. Trajan, consulted by Pliny and unable to find established case-law in his archives, ruled that freeborn foundlings, if identified, should be freed from slavery without payment.

IT WAS A GENERAL SOFTENING OF FEELING combined with continuing anxiety about manpower in the Roman Empire that induced Nerva and Trajan to institute schemes for the support of poor children. The foundling hospitals and orphanages of 18th- and early 19th-century Europe were often little better than organised infanticide; but the spread of contraception, and more recently of legalised abortion, has meant that our orphanages and adoption agencies can now cope with what was a major problem in antiquity.

Infanticide had two advantages over abortion. First, it was safer for the mother; and second, you knew before deciding its fate the sex of the child. Was there no prejudice against infanticide in the pagan world? In some communities there was; for Aristotle said that surplus (as distinct from deformed) infants should not be got rid of by exposure if the established customs of a state forbade it. In such states recourse must be had to abortion. But it is not until the 1st century A.D. that we find infanticide specifically condemned in extant writing, by the Alexandrian Jew Philo and the Roman Stoic Musonius Rufus.

As to abortion, the methods advocated in antiquity are listed by Keith Hopkins:

> "Anything ranging from a surgical operation of the knitting needle variety, malnutrition and inanition of the foetus, and the use of purgatives, diuretics, emetics, pessaries and aciduous medicaments, to direct pressure on the body, punching, lifting heavy weights, jumping, and riding in a cart along rough roads, together with the inevitable magical recipes, potions and lapidaries."

The dangers were of course considerable, and were publicised by such incidents as the death of Domitia, compelled to abort by her uncle, the Emperor Domitian, who had seduced her.

Whether or not abortion was illegal in Athens is a moot point. There was a speech ascribed to the 4th-century orator Lysias which turned on the question. But it is hard to believe that Plato and Aristotle would have prescribed it without self-defensive argument for their ideal states had it been illegal, or even generally considered outrageous. The Hippocratic Oath did indeed abjure facilitating it in any way. But that was in the context of the physician's overriding duty, which we find later formulated by Soranus, to preserve what nature engenders; and it may also have been a precaution against the dangerous nature of some drugs purveyed as abortifacients. Nor was that oath ever official, even if taken at all. Embryectomy was disapproved of by the most reputable doctors unless the life of the mother would otherwise be in danger. The first specific condemnation of abortion in a moral context occurs in an inscription of about 100 B.C. from a private shrine at Lydian Philadelphia. Of course it was a crime for a wife to abort without telling her husband: that was an infringement of his right to determine family planning. This applied even if divorce had intervened.

IN THE ROMAN WORLD abortion seems to have been commonly practised, but more by crude manipulation than by potions. The sale of abortifacients was illegal, and those who purveyed them were treated as poisoners.

Ovid's well-known protest should not be taken too seriously. In a pair of poems in his *Amores* he represents his Corinna as having induced an abortion surgically. His violent reaction is due to concern for her safety, so indirectly is an expression of love. He inveighs against abortion in general, but in his usual rhetorical manner, ingeniously deploying all the arguments he can think of to discredit it. Anyone who knows his Ovid will not take this as evidence of Roman law, or even opinion. But there are signs of disapproval in others, including Cicero. Seneca praised his mother for not having practised abortion like other women, which is interesting, since strictly speaking it was the *paterfamilias* who would decide. It shows that in practice the mother would have her say. We may take it that abortion was something deprecated in respectable circles, whose prevalence however was taken for granted.

Aristotle, too, had made an important reservation: abortion must not take place if life has begun in the embryo. That he reckoned, following contemporary medical opinion, to be on the 40th day for males, on the 90th for females. This is still considered by many to be the crux. Ancient

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opinion varied as to whether the soul entered at conception, at birth, or at some intermediate stage. It was debated whether the foetus could be called a living entity, or whether it was simply part of its mother. But the opinion that prevailed so far as to become the basis of Roman law on the subject was that of the Stoics: that the foetus was part of the mother, and that the soul did not enter until the moment of contact with the outside air. This was very important: it meant that a woman who aborted could not be deemed a murderess. Today a common criterion is that abortion should not take place after the foetus is capable of surviving delivery.[7]

CONTRACEPTIVE DEVICES were also prescribed by ancient medical writers, though not much space is allotted to them in the handbooks, and there is surprisingly no reference to them in the Third Book of Ovid's *Art of Love*, which gives the woman's side. There was a tendency not to distinguish them from abortifacients. Soranus, who was clear on the distinction, stressed the advantages of the former over the latter. Potions were the commonest form, the only one mentioned in the Hippocratic Corpus; and a hundred plants from which they could be distilled are mentioned by one writer or another. N. E. Himes, in his pioneering *Medical History of Contraception* (1936), dismissed them as undoubtedly ineffective, since no drug was known to Western science that, taken orally, would prevent conception. That was in 1936, just two years before the discovery that eventually led to "The Pill." Condoms were unknown in the ancient world. They are first mentioned by Gabriele Faloppio in 1564, as made of linen, and were used by Casanova among others. But they did not become at all common until the first vulcanisation of rubber in 1844.

There were, however, vaginal plugs and occlusive pessaries, first mentioned in Aristotle. These were of wool smeared with various substances, such as myrtle oil and white lead, honey, cedar-gum, alum or peppermint. The rationale was not necessarily understood. Thus Aristotle thought it was the *smoothness* of the oil instead of its stickiness that might be effective. Sticky substances can hold up spermatazoa (Marie Stopes was still advocating olive oil in 1931). Others of the substances recommended do have some spermicidal effect, such as vinegar, lemon juice, and alum. But it must have been well-nigh impossible to prove positive effectiveness. Some man, sterile by nature, might mistakenly but enthusiastically point to the manifest efficacy in his case even of one or other of the magic amulets which were also freely prescribed by pundits of lower calibre than Soranus.

It is odd that, while Greek had a specific noun for contraceptive, *atokion*, Latin had none beyond *venenum* ("poison"). And the scarcity of clear mention of any in Roman writers probably indicates general lack of confidence in them rather than their being so common as to be taken for granted. As to specific disapproval, it is found again in Musonius Rufus.

But when all is said and done, a mystery remains: how was it that so many men whom we know, or must believe, to have positively wanted a legitimate male heir, including Julius Caesar and Augustus, failed to produce one?

FINALLY, WHAT WAS THE ATTITUDE to these matters of the early Christians? As to population, the Old Testament injunctions to increase and multiply had been abandoned by the Jews after the Diaspora in favour of the two-child family deemed sufficient for the continuance of the race. Philo and Musonius both considered that sexual intercourse even within marriage was wrong unless aimed at procreation.[8] This doctrine, rooted in Jewish and Stoic puritanism, anticipated that of many Fathers of the Church. It is noteworthy that Constantine annulled the often re-enacted Augustan legislation for promoting the birth-rate. The Christian doctrine on marriage itself, developed from the New Testament and especially from St Paul, was that it was not unacceptable, but inferior to celibacy in holiness;[9] and this took precedence over any doctrine of political expediency.

Infanticide and abortion were condemned by Christians from the earliest times, again anticipated by Philo and Musonius. But Tertullian and

[7] Our present British law fixes this at 28 weeks; the Lane Committee recommended that this be reduced to 24, Mr James White's private member's bill in Parliament to 20.

[8] Jerome cites Seneca as saying, "let men show themselves to their wives not as lovers but as husbands."

[9] In the Church of England marriage service, the second reason given for the ordaining of marriage is "for a remedy against sin and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body."

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St Augustine allowed abortion where otherwise the foetus could become the unwitting murderer of its mother. Otherwise St Augustine condemned married couples who practised infanticide, abortion or the use of "sterility poisons" (presumably contraceptives).[10] He also condemned the Manichaean use of the so-called sterile period, and unfruitful modes of intercourse in general, adding "That is what Onan, son of Judah did, and God killed him for it." Actually the sin of Onan was his frustration of Judah's injunction that he should beget children by his brother's widow, not the method by which he did it. But the mistaken interpretation given to Genesis 38, 8–10, by some Rabbis and St Augustine was perpetuated by St Jerome in the way he translated the passage in the Vulgate, with the appalling result that what became known as "onanism" was branded for all Christendom as a sin, and one worthy of the severest condemnation.

The Christians did eventually compensate for their severe attitude towards pagan methods of family planning by what was called "the patrimony of the poor." Constantine, instigated by Lactantius, made much more general the schemes of some previous emperors for the nurture and clothing of poor children. Official foundling hospitals were slow to develop because of fears that they would be an encouragement to fornication.[11] But many exposed infants seem to have been reared by individual Christians.

And on this more cheerful note I will end what has been, I am afraid, a rather sordid story, but one for lack of which accounts of ancient life have too often been inadequate.

[10] *Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.15.17. Under the title "*Aliquando*" this has been the prime text in the Catholic condemnation of contraceptives. The condemnation of all artificial forms of birth-control was reaffirmed by St Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*, by Pope Sixtus V in his bull *Effrenatum* of 1588, and by Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* of 1968.

[11] Cf. the fears aroused, especially in our nonconformist churches, when a cure was found for syphilis.

Looking for Something?

Always puzzled, the man I keep seeing
Who charges down the road, stops, turns,
Runs back, stoops to pick up something,
Throws it down, turns again, stoops,
Picks up something, throws it down, runs. . . .

Always alone, he looks as much lost
As what he is looking for; will stop to think
While crossing a road of screaming brakes. A ghost,
He scares off neighbours who might help. Louts
Laugh at the man, shout "Look, the missing link!"

More puzzled than upset, he never speaks
To passers-by, never complains; but sometimes
Growls at baiting boys, spits, shakes
A helpless fist, and then goes on scanning
Gutters, pavements, other people's homes.

I'd like to help—but has he really lost
Anything? When I catch his eye, a look
So vacuous meets mine, I see, at last,
He is seeking something he has never had,
And has no clue what it is, or what it's like.

Edward Lowbury

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Column

WE HAVE, in recent years, become accustomed to accept terrorism as an ordinary fact of political life, to an extent which would once have almost been unthinkable. Even in these islands, where terrorism once seemed an activity practised by foreigners, madmen, and fanatics, we have come to take it almost for granted that in Northern Ireland acts of terror, whether by Protestants or Catholics, should be an almost daily event and have apparently accepted that this is a state of affairs which will continue as long as we can reasonably foresee. In Germany, any person of any prominence in public life takes it for granted that he should not venture from his home without taking proper precautions for his personal safety, which can no longer be entrusted to the hands of the law. In Italy, no journalist of any distinction is safe from having his knee-cap shot off. Throughout what is politely called the civilised world kidnappings, hijackings, assassinations, torture have become a rule of life. The only areas of the world where the rule does not apply is in those countries where terrorism, like everything else, has been taken out of private hands and become a monopoly of the state.

Future historians will surely regard this efflorescence of terrorism as one of the most characteristic features of our time and will no doubt interpret it, according to taste, either as a sign of a general breakdown of society or, perhaps, as a justified reaction against some of its most objectionable features by people who have ceased to believe in the possibilities of reform. In either case, they will surely comment on the extraordinary passivity displayed both by governments and by the public towards activities which, on the face of it, seem to constitute a direct threat to all the rules and conventions on which any kind of ordered society ultimately depends. They will also surely notice that these manifestations of violence have flourished at precisely the time when such words as compassion, human rights, the dignity of man are the stock-in-trade of every self-respecting politician. No hearts could be more overflowing with love and charity than those of Dr David Owen and Mr Andrew Young as they conspire with bloodthirsty guerrillas to bring to an end a state of affairs which is not to their liking.

We must however, in all probability, leave it to the future to find an answer to the kind of questions and puzzles which such a situation suggests. Most people today, one suspects, if they were honest, would confess to an almost total inability to provide any sort of solution to them. Nor is such a sense of helplessness absolutely unjustified, partly because terrorism, in its various modes and kinds, and as practised by individuals, organisations and governments, has by now achieved so rich and varied a pattern, manifests itself in so many and often such contradictory forms, that it has become difficult if not impossible to discover any common quality under which they can all be subsumed. What we have is not so much terrorism as a multiplicity, a hypertrophy, of terrorisms, each different in their object and their nature; if they have any common root it is in the contempt for human life which they display. Perhaps what we need is a zoology or botany of terrorism, in which the scientist of human behaviour will patiently explore, describe, and codify all the species of its fauna and flora until at length it may be possible to arrive at some general theory of their evolution.

ONE PARTICULAR SPECIES which would need to be distinguished is the assassin. Not all terrorists are assassins, any more than all criminals are murderers. But the assassin is of particular interest because, if he aims high enough, he is capable of producing historical effects out of all proportion to his individual objectives or to the means at his disposal. The assassin also offers a rewarding subject for study because more often than not he is apprehended and brought to trial, or at least, if the victim is important enough, subjected to exhaustive, meticulous, and sometimes painful investigation, so that all the facts of the case will be brought to light, though there will always be people who will suspect a cover-up or conspiracies undisclosed. At the end of it all, we should at least be able to form some idea of what made the assassin act as he did, what kind of person he was, and what if anything he hoped to achieve. The field-worker in the subject will not suffer from any lack of material; his difficulty will be rather whether he is able to reduce it to any kind of manageable and intelligible shape.

Two recent books, both American, and written by husband and wife, may be regarded as useful contributions to the subject. One is a study of Lee Harvey Oswald,[1] who assassinated President John F. Kennedy on 22 November 1963, and the other of James Earl Ray,[2] who on 4 April 1968

[1] *Marina and Lee*. By PRISCILLA JOHNSON MCMILLAN. Harper & Row, $15.00; Collins, £7.95 (British publication 20 April).

[2] *The Making of an Assassin: The Life of James Earl Ray*. By GEORGE MCMILLAN. Little, Brown, $8.95.

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killed Martin Luther King. The dates are significant, because they corresponded with a period in American history of such turbulence and violence that at times the Republic seemed in danger of falling apart, and undoubtedly both assassins hoped, by their actions, to contribute to this process. The turbulence and unrest which reigned in the streets, in the cities, in the universities was all the more remarkable because it coincided with one of the greatest periods of prosperity the United States has ever known. It was equally paradoxical that when, after 1970, prosperity gave way to recession, political violence declined with it.

It would not, however, be correct to regard the two assassins as typical products of the economic conditions which provoked so much political and social unrest in the United States in the '60s. The militant leaders of revolt and unrest during that period, especially in the universities, sprang very largely from prosperous middle-class families, with parents who turned an indulgent eye on their children's sowing of political wild oats; or, on the other hand, from a black minority struggling to overcome the social and economic inequalities under which they suffered. What was remarkable was that these two groups never effectively succeeded in joining hands to achieve a common purpose.

EARL RAY AND LEE OSWALD, however, belonged to neither group. Both came from the South, and Earl Ray hated the Blacks, so that the fantasy of killing "Big Nigger", as he called Martin Luther King, achieved such an intensity as to become compulsive. And both emerged from the lower depths of American society, the children of poor white trash with few prospects of sharing the abundance which burgeoned around them. Indeed, a large part of the interest of both these books is in the picture they give of life on the lowest stratum of American society, so sharply at variance with the image most people form of America and America likes to form of itself.

The two assassins had other things in common, to such an extent indeed that one is tempted to believe that they present individual cases of a special psychological type which finds in the act of assassination the satisfaction of its deepest and most urgent needs. Both grew up without a father; and neither of their mothers was of a kind to help them to overcome their loss. As children, both suffered the kind of deprivation which provides an easy introduction to delinquency and petty crime. But both were regarded, and regarded themselves, as the brightest and "smartest" of their families, and from this derived a belief that they were destined to better and greater things than the rest of their kind.

Both, perhaps because of this vanity, found it difficult to communicate with others. They were essentially loners, reserved, secretive, self-directed, hugging to their bosoms aspirations and passions which they themselves only half-understood. Both were congenital liars, often for no very obvious motive, so that their lies seemed to serve no purpose except to betray fantasies of themselves they had no other means of satisfying. Shiftless, unstable, unsettled in all the ordinary ways of life, they both on occasions showed capacities which might have provided the foundation for a satisfactory or even a successful career. In the terrible prison at Jefferson City, on the Missouri River, where he was serving a sentence of twenty years before he escaped, Ray became a successful entrepreneur, or "merchant", peddling illegal goods, including drugs, to other prisoners, and accumulating a fund of some $8,000 which went to finance the assassination of Martin Luther King. Oswald was very nearly a miser in his personal and domestic expenditure, but in all his jobs proved himself a reliable and dependable employee, except for his difficulty in forming any kind of cooperative relationship with his fellow-workers. His only extravagance was on the weapons he used, first in his abortive attempt to shoot General William Walker, and later to kill Kennedy.

Both men were badly educated, and only imperfectly literate, but both had intellectual aspirations beyond their abilities. Intense political interests drove Ray into a flirtation with National Socialism, and Oswald into a curiously ambivalent form of adherence to Communism, in both its Soviet and its Cuban varieties. Both, finally, were animated by a powerful sense of alienation from their own country, largely perhaps because it had so signally failed to satisfy their own exaggerated assessment of their own deserts.

ONE MIGHT MULTIPLY such parallels between the two men, even down to the smallest details of their characters and personality. There was, however, one difference between them which was so important that it makes all the likenesses between them seem negligible.

Ray never achieved, or even tried to achieve, any satisfactory relationship with a woman; his sexual experiences were limited to brief acts of copulation with the cheapest and most squalid kind of prostitute and to the various forms of perversion available to the prisoners in the infamous penitentiary at Jefferson City. Oswald, however, in the Soviet Union formed an attachment to a young Russian girl and married her before they returned together to the United States. He could not have been said to be a

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satisfactory husband; he was both mean and brutal to his wife, repeatedly beating her up and grudging every cent of domestic expenditure. He was violently jealous and possessive and refused to allow his wife to learn English in case it should lessen her dependence on him. Yet it seems true that he genuinely loved her, and indeed that she was the only person in the world he really did love, apart from his baby daughter to whom he was passionately devoted and treated with a tenderness he rarely showed his wife. She, in turn, though profoundly disenchanted and disabused by his treatment of her, seems to have felt that she had undertaken a final and total commitment to him, which was founded partly on gratitude to him for bringing her to the United States which, unlike him, she dearly loved.

THE FASCINATION OF *Marina and Lee* lies as much in its account of the strange love affair which bound the two together as in its analysis of the psychological and political motives which led Oswald to his final act of assassination. An illegitimate child, Marina, like Oswald, had been brought up without the benefit of parental love, and this in itself contributed to the bond which held them together. But whereas deprivation turned Oswald sour, in Marina it led to an almost childish delight in whatever meagre happiness she was offered. As a young girl in Moscow she had been flirtatious and, so far as Moscow allows, pleasure-loving, with a liking for the Western pop-and-rock music, Western films, Western fashions, which were popular among her contemporaries. Indeed, the original basis of Oswald's attraction for her was precisely that he was an American, with all the glamour she associated with the West; moreover, as a defector to the Soviet Union he enjoyed exceptional privileges, including a flat of his own.

But in the United States things were rather different. Marina responded to Oswald's brutal ill-treatment of her by teasing and taunting him, criticising him for his sexual inadequacy and inflaming his jealousy by comparing him with lovers she had known in Moscow. Together they entered into a kind of *folie à deux* which was all the more intense because Oswald wished it so and because Marina's ignorance of English isolated her from the outside world. Yet beneath Marina's taunts and reproaches there lay a touching and unshakable fidelity which all Oswald's misbehaviour could not destroy. It is ironic that Marina, the child of Soviet society, had a taste for all the freedom and pleasures of American society, which Oswald, an American, hated and despised.

MRS MCMILLAN'S BOOK is based on an acquaintanceship with Marina which has extended over thirteen years, during which she took the opportunity to investigate every detail, even the most intimate, of her life with Oswald. At the same time she has meticulously checked everything Marina told her with the testimony given to the Warren Commission and with all the additional evidence which has subsequently become available from both official and unofficial sources. The result is an almost minute-by-minute account of Oswald's life, up to the moment when he himself was shot by the minor-league gangster Jack Ruby, which scarcely leaves any room for doubt that the assassination of President Kennedy was what the Warren Commission concluded it was—the work of a lone hand acting in an isolation which was only intensified by his own dreams and fantasies, most of all by his compulsive ambition that "I want to give the people of the United States something to think about." In this he certainly succeeded.

In the course of reaching this important conclusion, in a manner which to my mind effectively disposes of all the conspiratorial theories inspired by the assassination of President Kennedy, Mrs McMillan gives a singularly convincing account, not only of the character and personality of Oswald, and of the curious ménage which he conducted with his wife, but of two entirely different kinds of society of which we rarely find so vivid a picture. The first is the society of the young Russians who were the natural associates of Marina and Lee during Oswald's stay in the Soviet Union—their pleasures, amusements, distractions and preoccupations; and Mrs McMillan describes it with sufficient sympathy and understanding to convince us that even in a land where tyranny reigns supreme human beings, especially young ones, do not cease to be human. Strangely it is only Oswald himself, the child of the land of freedom, who, even in these surroundings, still remains stubbornly inhuman.

The second society which Mrs McMillan depicts is that of the rotting American underworld of cheap vermin-infested apartments, decaying city centres, compulsive impulses to petty crime and violence, to which Oswald transported his pathetically and yet appealingly helpless wife when he took her away with him to the land of the free. Mrs McMillan presents the ironical contrast between these two societies without prejudice and without passion, and if she leaves us with a feeling that violence is an almost inevitable outcome of the kind of society of which Oswald was a product, she does not forget to present us also with its mitigating and

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alleviating features, most of all that astonishing capacity for idealism, generosity and kindness which is one of the most striking features of American life.

Oswald was not a very attractive character. If a hand fed him, he almost invariably bit it, and gratitude was a feeling which seems to have been wholly alien to his stony-hearted self-esteem. His wife, a genuine waif in a society so totally alien to her, was almost wholly isolated by her husband's refusal to allow her to assimilate. Yet this oddly associated and curiously united couple were, almost from the moment of their arrival in the United States, and continued to be beneficiaries of innumerable acts of kindness, sympathy and affection to which Marina at least responded with eager almost childlike warmth, even if they did nothing to melt Oswald's ice-cold heart. It is one of the particular merits of Mrs McMillan's book that, despite its terrible end, and the shadows that continuously encompass her story, it is not entirely a picture of darkness.

The river and the train

On this journey I choose
a sidecarriage, preferring
a cell's solitary to those
adolescents in the long hut.

By my left eye the landscape
is at slack tide: trees and barns
barely flowing in a thick swell;
soon it will turn, carrying us
south on a regular current.

A thumbnail of moon hangs
just that space from Venus
Miro drew, and I pump a
barrier of blood to keep
my eyes awake.

Love stays on these words
describing a line like
circumference. Oh I tug
and if it breaks, something
not myself goes free.

Breath holds for what seems
a longer moment, and
this is immortality;
so many people I knew jumped
before the river ran again.

This circling water made our
first measuring, and now we hope
that if we call the god benign
he will not insist on sacrifice.

But I recall a woman who cried
that she must die to give
her daughter living space
and it is her tears I drown in.

Edwin Brock

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Clive James

A Letter from Leningrad

To Michael Frayn

I

Dear *Michael*, here in *Leningrad*
The wind unseasonably chill
For *April* ought to make me sad,
And yet I feel a heady thrill
To see the white rice in the air
Blown every which way round the square
Before the *Winter Palace*. Cold
Grey sky sets off the flourished gold
And whipped-cream plaster rococo
Embellishments that help to make
The place look such a birthday cake—
I only wish there were more snow.
Despite the risk of frozen feet
I'd like to see the dream complete.

II

Speaking of feet: they're killing me.
I've walked around the city now
For ages, there's so much to see.
Already I can well see how
Poets, composers, every kind
Of artist thought this town designed
Exclusively so that they might
Be stimulated day and night
To works of genius. I shan't
Pretend to be quite in their league.
Indeed I'd rather plead fatigue
And shirk the challenge, but I can't:
The ghosts of all those gifted men
Are sneering as I suck my pen.

III

The greatest of them all, of course,
Was *Pushkin*. I'm just halfway through
His masterpiece, but the full force
Of Inspiration's only too
Apparent. In all literature
There's no fecundity so pure
As his. Through him the Gods gave tongue
And made damned certain he died young.
So multifarious a voice,
So disciplined a formal sense—
His talent was just too immense.
He had to go. There was no choice.
Like *Mozart* he was *Heaven*-sent
And back to *Heaven* he soon went.

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IV

"*Eugene Onegin*"! In an hour
I read one stanza. Such compression
Demands all one's attentive power.
Besides, I must make a confession:
My *Russian*, after months of sweat,
Is really not so hot as yet.
In fact it's pretty poor. As well
As being envious as *Hell*
Of all your other attributes,
I wish my Army hitch had taught
Me tricks of a more taxing sort.
I studied how to polish boots
With spit and spoon. *You* got to know
The lingo of the dreaded foe.

V

We neither of us won the war.
I'm told it sort of went away
When both sides settled for a draw.
Lord Chalfont still has lots to say
About the imminent Red Threat,
But nothing much has happened yet
In global terms. The *Warsaw Pact*
Intractably remains a fact.
It's hard to see how they could lose,
Our experts warn, should they advance.
Poor NATO wouldn't stand a chance.
They've got more tanks than they can use.
By midday on *D-Day Plus One*
They'd be in *Budleigh Salterton.*

VI

But will they risk annihilation?
I don't think anybody knows.
The thought of total devastation
If ever harsh words come to blows
Still keeps the Super-powers in check.
Better to wring each other's neck
At second hand, on battlegrounds
Where losses can be kept in bounds.
When Ideologies collide
They tend to choose exotic places
Where folk with ethnic-looking faces
Don't mind committing suicide,
Or anyway don't seem to. Thus
It's all thrashed out without much fuss.

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A Letter from Leningrad

VII

Meanwhile the vast *USSR*
Grows ever stronger and more bored.
The Ceaseless Struggle rages far
Away, in little lands abroad.
The *Marxist-Leninist* ideal
At home long since became as real
As it could ever be. The State
Takes charge of everybody's fate
From womb to tomb. Complete control
Is exercised on all resources.
The harnessing of natural forces
By now includes the human soul.
What you may do or even dream
Is all laid down by the Régime,

VIII

Which should have no more use for Terror.
The People now are too well drilled
To contemplate embracing error.
Assent's so thoroughly instilled
That new directives are obeyed
Before they've even been displayed
On all those billboards and red flags
Beneath which every building sags.
Nobody sane could see the need
For harsher methods than this thick
Miasma of bad rhetoric.
The Masses long ago agreed
That Inner Freedom makes no sense.
Which only leaves the Dissidents—

IX

Who go through several kinds of *Hell*
In special clinics where the drugs
That make them ill instead of well
Are forced upon them, not by thugs,
But qualified psychiatrists.
It's one of History's little twists:
The sane are classified insane
And rather than relieving pain
The doctors cause it. Strange, but true—
When those with preternatural guts
Are first of all defined as nuts,
Then made so—but that's *Marx* for you:
To put the Future beyond doubt
What must be must be brought about.

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X

The common run of folk, meanwhile,
Can feel comparatively safe
From decimation *Stalin*-style.
Their bonds, though still strong, do not chafe
As proudly they with one accord
March asymptotically toward
That feast of dubious delights
Zinoviev calls the Yawning Heights—
A Workers' Paradise on Earth
Which has no use for abstract thought.
Fantastically good at sport
A new Mankind has come to birth,
A race that stands a whole head taller—
Except the head's a trifle smaller.

XI

Useless to ask what might have been
Had things stayed roughly as they were.
October 1917
Made certain nothing could occur
Save transformation. History's tide—
Which *Spengler* said we have to ride
Or else go under—ran its course
With hypermetamorphic force
Until no links were left to sever.
All ties were broken with the past.
No going back. The die was cast
And everything was changed forever.
How strange, in that case, we should feel
Those days to be so much more real

XII

Than these. Yet really not so strange,
For nothing dates like human dreams
Of *Heaven*. Terrified of change,
The *Russia* of the present seems
An embolism. Time forgot
To flow, and stopped, and formed a clot.
There's next to nowt in the whole place—
Including rockets aimed at Space—
That wouldn't be there anyway
Had *Lenin* failed to catch his train.
Suppose he'd chosen to remain
In *Zurich*, who can really say
His country would not now be strong?
Perhaps he got the whole thing wrong

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A Letter from Leningrad

XIII

And simply blasted in the bud
What might have been a brilliant flower.
Perhaps in shedding so much blood
To gain unchallengeable power
He stopped what was just getting started
And left his country broken-hearted,
With what result we now all know—
The *Gulag Archipelago*.
Too black a thought with which to end
This letter, and besides, I'm too
Aware that I'm addressing *you*—
A master of the light touch. Friend,
Forgive my solemn voice of doom.
I aimed at gaiety, not gloom,

XIV

But somehow lost my mirth. Mistake.
It's boorish to parade one's grief
And weep for a whole country's sake,
Assuming it's lost all belief
In human decency. The fact
Remains that, though the deck is stacked
Against them, none the less the just
Are born and win each other's trust.
Nadezhda Mandelstam has said
The truth still comes back from the grave
And she should know. I think I'll waive
What rights I have to mourn the dead.
I'm better at the kind of tears
I cried when seeing "*Donkey's Years*."

XV

Besides, I like it here. I've seen
The *Peter-Paul* and the *Tsars'* tombs.
I've stared at the *Bronze Horseman*, been
Through all the *Hermitage*'s rooms.
I've seen the Empress *Catherine*'s clock—
A ten-foot wingspan gold peacock
Some Grand Duke thought the kind of gift
That might convey his general drift.
I've seen. . . . But there seems little point,
Here in this Window on the West,
In telling you what you know best.
You've been here and you've cased the joint,
Liking to know whereof you speak.
Good principle. See you next week.

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The General & the Poet

Pushkin and Barclay de Tolly—By MICHAEL JOSSELSON

"There is no reliable correlation between historical significance, measured by the effect of action on events, and historical fame, measured by acclaim or volume of eulogy."

Sidney Hook, THE HERO IN HISTORY

IN THE PREFACE to his fragmentary *Vie de Napoléon* (1837) Stendhal warned that the story would have to be rewritten time and again in years to come as reminiscences and other data became available. Many correctives would be needed to the legends Napoleon spun so assiduously throughout his life. Of these legends the most tenacious has been that of "*General Winter*" —the attempt to explain away Napoleon's defeat in 1812 as due to the snows of Russia. Stendhal himself, as an eye-witness, exploded this myth: the weather in Moscow had been splendid just before the *Grande Armée* began its October retreat. By other accounts we know that the severe cold, snow, and ice, which in the end turned the retreat into monumental disaster, only set in at the beginning of November when Napoleon and his ill-fated army were almost back to Smolensk.

If any single person could be said to have caused this defeat, besides Napoleon himself and his blunders, it was Barclay de Tolly. Far-sighted, convinced (at a time when the afterglow of Tilsit had not yet waned) that a showdown with Napoleon was unavoidable, Barclay set out, as Minister of War during the eighteen months that preceded the invasion, to organise and prepare Russian forces for the great contest. As commander in the field he pursued the thankless strategy of avoiding decisive battles, determined to lure Napoleon deep into Russia, keeping Russian forces intact for the day when Napoleon's army would be so weakened that it could not withstand a counter-offensive. Barclay de Tolly was not a military genius but he possessed the true wisdom of which Thucydides speaks, making careful use of his advantages—in this case Russia's vast distances—in the knowledge that things would change. Although Napoleon was informed early about Barclay's strategy, he chose to disregard the warning; it did not fit into his preconceived ideas.

A THIRD-GENERATION RUSSIAN from Lutheran Livonia where his Scottish ancestors had settled in the early 17th century, Barclay de Tolly began his active military career at the age of fifteen.

He was neither a pastor as Chateaubriand claimed (perhaps because Barclay was often called "the Minister"), nor was he the son of a pastor as Clausewitz believed. Barclay's father was a junior Russian officer who retired early to take care of his small Baltic landholdings. From this very modest background, Barclay made his career—finishing as Prince and Field-Marshal—on the strength of his character and abilities. He did not benefit from any protection at court until the day in April 1807 when, still a little-known Major-General at 38, convalescing from battle wounds, he received a compassionate visit from Alexander I and thoroughly impressed him in the course of a long conversation. A year later the Tsar's favourable impressions were confirmed during the war in Finland; and from then on, except for one lapse, Barclay enjoyed the trust of his unstable monarch. The letters exchanged between the Tsar and the General clarify dramatic episodes and throw light on the characters of both correspondents. Of Alexander's foremost assistants Barclay de Tolly is the only one who would die in the Tsar's good graces, never having wavered in his loyalty to the autocrat.

Barclay's strategy in 1812, not new in itself, was far from popular. His fellow generals sought his removal; the nobles were outraged by the loss of so much of their land to the enemy; and ordinary Russians, mistrustful of his foreign-sounding name, suspected treason. The hue and cry resulted in Barclay's momentary eclipse after the fall of Moscow.

BUT WHAT ABOUT Kutuzov, whom Tolstoy glorified and whom Stalin described as standing "a head" above Barclay de Tolly? The creation of Tolstoy's genius whom generations of readers have taken to their hearts is also a legend. In his essay, *The Hedgehog and The Fox*, Sir Isaiah Berlin demonstrated that Tolstoy, for all his claims of "undeviating devotion to the sacred cause of the truth . . . treats facts cavalierly." Sir Isaiah noted how instructive it is

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> "to observe the steps by which he [Tolstoy] transforms him [Kutuzov] from the sly, elderly, feeble voluptary, the corrupt and somewhat sycophantic courtier of the early drafts of *War and Peace* which were *based on authentic sources* [my emphasis], into the unforgettable symbol of the Russian people in all its simplicity and intuitive wisdom."[1]

As to Stalin's estimation, it is contradicted by Marx and Engels whose judgment was that

> "Barclay de Tolly ... was, beyond question, the best of Alexander's generals, unpretending, persevering, resolute, and full of common sense."[2]

"Undeviating devotion to ... the truth" is what one misses in the works of some chauvinist Russian historians and military writers, both Tsarist and Soviet. Their devotion to the task of safeguarding autocracy or fanning patriotism has resulted in their making the all-Russian Kutuzov into a giant and the "foreign" Barclay into a dwarf. In life, in historiography, Barclay has been the victim of corrosive xenophobia.

Of late, however, some unbiased Soviet writers and scholars have looked beyond the ideological wall. Some of them have found inspiration in Alexander Pushkin's hymn to Barclay de Tolly, "The Commander (*Polkovodets*)." While studying this poem, they perforce have been led to reflect upon what it was that so fascinated Pushkin in the history and character of Barclay de Tolly.

Only a single book, quite incomplete and only in Russian and German, has appeared on Napoleon's great opponent; yet in all the accounts of the period that have proliferated since 1812, Barclay has been present, usually misconceived or treated peripherally. Isn't it time to repair a defect of long standing? Andrew Marvell's words on Cromwell are well suited to Barclay de Tolly:

> *So shall his praise to after times encrease,*
> *When truth shall be allow'd, and faction cease.*

★

[1] See Isaiah Berlin's essay, reprinted in *Russian Thinkers* (1978).

[2] Their verdict is confirmed by a "table of ratings" of the "Fifteen Best Generals in Russian history" published in St Petersburg in 1912. It shows the great Suvorov of an earlier period clearly in the lead with a total of 57 points out of a possible 60 (top 12 points for strategy, tactics, initiative, personal bravery, and 9 for coolness). He is followed by his contemporary, Rumiantsev, with 52 points, then by the heroes of 1812, Barclay de Tolly (48), Kutuzov (47), and Bagration (45). In strategy Kutuzov scores 10 points to Barclay's 9, but both receive 10 for tactics and 7 for initiative. Barclay out-points Kutuzov in coolness and bravery. Both Barclay and Bagration reach a chilly near-perfect 11 points for their coolness.

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"Is it possible that after twenty-five years of silence a poet should not be permitted to utter Barclay's name with sympathy and emotion?"
Alexander Pushkin (1836)

BARCLAY DE TOLLY'S REPUTATION has been buffeted about nearly as much since his death in 1818 as during his lifetime. He has been defamed, denigrated, or dismissed as "merely methodical" far more often than he has been praised. The image created by Tolstoy—lumping Barclay with other unreliable "Germans" at the 1812 headquarters and completely overshadowing him with the all-Russian Kutuzov—is the Barclay millions know . . . and barely remember.

Just as Kutuzov's greatest monument is *War and Peace*, so Barclay's is Pushkin's "The Commander", which is based upon a painting. It is a truism that the qualities of Pushkin's verse which make him the most admired and beloved of Russian poets cannot be conveyed in English. One might therefore perhaps try to imagine this poem as if it had been written by a mythical poet, half Byron, half Keats.

In the sombre days of 1812 when 13-year-old Alexander Pushkin was infected (like nearly everybody else) with the conviction that Barclay was "a traitor", a first corrective was supplied by Wilhelm Kuechelbecker, a fellow-poet and fellow-schoolboy in the select Tsarskoe Selo *lycée*, two years older than Pushkin. In a letter quite clearly aimed at influencing his schoolmates, his mother (a distant relative of Barclay) chided her son for jumping to hasty and calumnious conclusions:

". . . Would the Tsar offer Barclay the choice between returning to his post of Minister of War and staying in the field as Commander of the First Army if there were any thought of treason or of any other fault imputable to him? What better proof is there of Barclay's love for his fatherland than his acceptance to serve in a subordinate position? . . ."[3]

Pushkin was one of those to whom Kuechelbecker passed the message, and it would seem that the two linked ideas of Barclay's love for his fatherland and his willingness to serve as Kutuzov's subordinate implanted themselves in Pushkin's mind.

Nevertheless in 1825, Pushkin (like most others) was still hostile to Barclay, even though there was no longer any question of "treason." The smell of treason, however, lingered on, fixed by his name's "outlandish sound." The posts and ranks and titles that came to Barclay after 1812 had not really cleared the air, then or after. At Alexander's death, while Grand Duke Constantine was still the presumed heir, Pushkin wrote to a friend:

". . . As a loyal subject I am naturally grieved by the death of the Tsar; but as a poet I am happy at Constantine I's accession to the throne. There is much romanticism in him; his stormy youth, the campaigns with Suvorov, his hostility to the German Barclay, remind me of Henry V. . . ."[4]

Sometime before 1830, Pushkin's opinions underwent a change. In the third quatrain of the fragmentary Chapter 10 of *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin wrote forthrightly:

And who then came to our assistance
When we were bowed beneath the rod
In 1812? The folk's resistance,
The winter, Barclay, Russia's God.[5]

Believing these verses and this chapter to be in fact much too forthright for publication or even for the desk drawer, Pushkin left them only in code—which was deciphered finally in 1910.

IN DECEMBER 1826, the War Gallery in the Winter Palace had been inaugurated, in commemoration of the Patriotic War of 1812. It is an immensely long hall, its crimson walls covered from top to bottom with 331 portraits, almost all of them done by Pushkin's friend, the skilful English portraitist George Dawe.

Tsar Alexander had discovered George Dawe and his gift for likenesses and flattery in 1818 at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle. All but seven of the 331 paintings are busts. The three portraits of the Allied sovereigns—Alexander, Francis, and Frederick William—are large equestrian canvases, and besides these are four large full-length portraits: Barclay and Kutuzov faced respectively by Wellington and Constantine. Apart from the two foreign monarchs and Wellington, all the subjects were commanders in the Russian Army, including a dozen or so foreign nationals in Russian service.

The portrait of Barclay, considered by many to be Dawe's finest, was painted after an etching done from life two years before Barclay's death by Carl August Senff (painter, engraver, and art teacher at the University of Dorpat). Dawe idealised Barclay's features, elongating the forehead, straightening the nose and, by lengthening the lips, changing Senff's warm, kind expression into one of scorn. It was this look of contempt that especially haunted Pushkin. Barclay is angled against a dramatic sky and there stretches behind him "a host encamped", in fact the Russian encampment on the outskirts of Paris in 1814. On his many visits to the War Gallery Pushkin was fascinated by this portrayal of a noble, lofty, tragic figure:

[3] Justine to Wilhelm Kuechelbecker, 24 August 1812, in Tynianov, *Kiukhlia* (Moscow, 1975), p. 444.
[4] Alexander Pushkin to Pavel A. Katenin, 4 December (O.S.) 1825, in A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1937–1959), vol. XIII, p. 247.
[5] Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin* (tr. Babette Deutsch, 1964), p. 241.

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But of this sombre band of brothers
One always draws my mind more strongly than the others. . . .

Pushkin first visited the Gallery during the summer of 1827 upon his return from exile. Later he became a frequent visitor on his way to palace duties after his appointment by Nicholas I in 1834 as "gentleman of the chamber" (an appointment Pushkin found highly offensive). The poet's interest was sharpened by a press episode which occurred at about this same time.

No voice had been publicly raised in Barclay's favour for as long as Pushkin could remember. In September 1833 the *Moscow Telegraph* finally broke the silence by stating in print that Barclay had preserved the Army and, by his temporising with Napoleon, had become "the guardian of Russia":

> Regrettably circumstances did not permit Barclay to complete his great deed which therefore is not appreciated by many as much as it should be. . . .

Nicholas I threatened to close down the paper because of this "offensive gossip." Pushkin knew of the incident and was pained by it. His mood at this time was one of "sadness, depression, heart-rending melancholy", and he looked at Barclay's portrait with a growing sense of identification.[6]

PUSHKIN had discovered a good deal about Barclay from some of the surviving generals of 1812 with whom he had become friends (among them Raevskii, Davydov, Ermolov, Langeron, and Zakrevskii). From Zakrevskii he heard details of the lynch mob attacks against Barclay—in early drafts of his poem he tried out raw phrases like "the mob barked at you" and "the louts barked at you"—and from Davydov and Ermolov he learned of their own conversions during the 1812 campaign from severest Barclay critics to true admirers. Ermolov even wrote Davydov to say that "everything Barclay said at the Fili war council should be cast in letters of gold." Pushkin also saw Speranskii in 1834 and probably sounded him out on Barclay and heard him praised as War Minister and author of the Yellow Book reforms.[7]

On Easter Sunday 1835 Pushkin finished the final draft of "The Commander", titled in early drafts, "Barclay de Tolly." It passed the censors without apparent problem and Pushkin published it in early October 1836 in *The Contemporary*, the literary journal of which he was editor. Ecstatic praise and pointed abuse greeted the publication of these alexandrines. They became a great subject of controversy. "Barclay—a delight", was the verdict passed by Alexander Turgenev, a leading opinion maker, to the poet Prince Viazemskii. Nicolai Gogol was enthusiastic: "Has any one anywhere seen such felicity?" Nicolas Grech, a well-known journalist, lavished effusions on Pushkin (in a private letter):

> ". . .With this exemplary poem, exemplary also in its form, you have given proof to the world that in you Russia has a true poet, a supporter of honour, devoted to truth. . . . Honour to you, glory, and gratitude! You have found the true, the real, and the only meaning of poetry! . . . "

In Pushkin's grateful reply, his admiration for Barclay's character was expressed without reticence:

> ". . . Barclay's stoic features are among the most remarkable in our history. Whether one can entirely support him in matters of the art of war, I do not know; but his personality will forever deserve wonder and worship. . . . "

Later, Vissarion Belinsky, the foremost Russian critic of Pushkin's time, called the poem "one of the greatest works of Pushkin's genius." And in the 20th century, the literary historian D. S. Mirsky has judged the poem to be "the most majestic" of Pushkin's "elegiac meditations" of this period.[8]

THE FIRST VOLLEY AGAINST "The Commander" was fired by Login Golenishchev-Kutuzov, a naval officer and, more importantly, Kutuzov's nephew. He stumbled upon a reprint of the poem (in the *Northern Bee*, 15 October 1836) and was horrified by what he felt was an affront to his uncle, although he did admit to finding some of the poetry beautiful. His literal mind was also upset by poetic "lies", such as Pushkin's "alien soil" ("*To alien soil in sacrifice you brought your all*"). To be sure, Pushkin was in error. Barclay's "love for his fatherland" had not really pierced the habitual Russian reaction to a Baltic accent, a "French" name, and a faith which was not Orthodox. The assumption that Barclay was "foreign" was probably so widespread that it may not even have occurred to Pushkin to find out the truth. In any case the factual error furnished a useful stick for beating the poet. Kutuzov wielded it at length in a fulminating letter he addressed to the Minister of Education and President of the

[6] *Moskovskii Telegraf*, No. 9, September 1833, in V. A. Manuilov and L. B. Modzalevskii, "Polkovodets Pushkina", *Pushkinskii Vremennik* (Leningrad 1939), p. 139. N. N. Petrunina, "Polkovodets", Akademia Nauk, *Stikhotvorenia Pushkina, 1820–1830 godov* (Leningrad, 1974), p. 287. Georgii Koka, "Pushkin o Polkovodtsakh dvenatsatogo goda", *Prometei* (Moscow, 1969), VII, p. 18.

[7] The so-called Yellow Book presents Barclay's great achievements in army organisation and, especially, in pioneering efforts towards the humanisation of military service.

[8] D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature* (1964), p. 93.

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Academy of Science (S. S. Uvarov, whose hostility to Pushkin was common knowledge), and made much also of two other verses he felt insulted his uncle's memory—the line in which the Nation is said to be rescued by Barclay's stratagem, and that referring to Barclay's having to yield the high command when only "half-way home." Login Golenishchev-Kutuzov made sure that this letter was widely known by publishing the attack in 3,600 copies in pamphlet form (November 1836).

He also assaulted Pushkin in a more personal way by putting pressure on his cousin, Elisabeth Khitrovo, one of Kutuzov's five daughters, who happened to be Pushkin's mistress. Elisabeth was sixteen years older than Pushkin, she was twice widowed, and she herself had a daughter, Daria, old enough to be married (to the Austrian Ambassador Ficquelmont) and to be in love with Pushkin, too, though this relationship was platonic. Kutuzov angrily told his cousin that Daria must remove Pushkin's portrait from her bedroom—after the insult of "The Commander." Elisabeth wrote tearfully to her lover:

> ". . . Your elegy is causing me endless trouble. I feel like a martyr, dear Pushkin, but it makes me love you even more. . . ."[9]

It was Pushkin who was really having the endless trouble, including a murky flood of anonymous letters. The St Petersburg salons of 1836 thrived on the controversy. Society generally sided against Pushkin and against Barclay. It seemed to be taken for granted by every one that to praise Barclay was to dispraise Kutuzov.

AFTER THE KUTUZOV ATTACK appeared, Pushkin published an "Explanation" in the next issue of *The Contemporary* (December 1836). In it he dismissed the notion that giving recognition to the one diminished the other, that his admiring and compassionate verses on Barclay could in any way lessen Kutuzov's well-established and well-deserved fame. "Kutuzov's monument is the rock of St Helena!" wrote Pushkin. Then again there was the matter of Barclay de Tolly's "outlandish" name. Kutuzov's "name is not only sacred to us, but we Russians should rejoice at the Russian sound of his name."

Pushkin proceeded to give Kutuzov his undisputed due, acknowledging that only he could have given battle to Napoleon at Borodino, only he could have sacrificed Moscow. But—

> ". . . Because Kutuzov was great, must we be ungrateful for Barclay de Tolly's achievements? . . ."

Finally, Pushkin met head-on that strange and seemingly indestructible Russian literary tradition which calls writers to account for not following approved views:

> "Is it possible that after twenty-five years of silence, a poet should not be permitted to utter Barclay's name with sympathy and emotion? You reproach the poet for the injustice of his complaints; you say that Barclay's merits have been duly acknowledged, appreciated, rewarded. Maybe so, but by whom and when? Certainly not by the people and not in 1812! . . ."

Twelve years later, Viskovatov was saying the same thing, though with an optimistic ending:

> ". . . Our Government has done everything to reward the merits and to honour the memory of Barclay de Tolly; what he was lacking is only the full justice and gratitude of his contemporaries, but this debt too will be paid for them by posterity. . . ."

Pushkin felt strongly that the debt had not been paid. He realised with a poet's sympathy that the titles and rewards later heaped upon Barclay by the Tsar did not redeem the antipathy of the Russian people—to the man and to his memory. Barclay's hope that "impartial posterity will judge with greater justice" was still forlorn. Pushkin's own hope was that "The Commander" would be the leaven working in the Russian consciousness, yielding wonder and worship.

BUT MEANWHILE HE had to keep his footing in the controversy and to spare the tears of his martyred mistress. Very soon after publication of his "Explanation" he produced a poem "To The Artist (*Khudozhniku*)", dedicated to the sculptor Galberg. Pushkin described the sculptor's studio and his entries in the St Petersburg competition for twin statues of Barclay and Kutuzov to stand before Kazan Cathedral:[10]

> *Here is Barclay the conceiver and here Kutuzov the completer. . . .*

Thus, in one line of verse, did Pushkin demonstrate his impartial stance.

BUT WAS THIS WHAT was wanted either? Suddenly it turned out that the approved

[9] Elisaveta Mikhailovna Khitrovo to Pushkin, St Petersburg, 4 November 1836, in Pushkin, *Polnoe . . .*, vol. XVI, p. 180.

[10] The Kutuzov-Barclay statues had been ordered by Alexander I in 1818 soon after Barclay's death and the unveiling of Moscow's monument to its early saviours, Minin and Pozharskii. Alexander's rescript made clear the parallel between "immortal deeds in olden times" and "in our own times." In the monument competition which finally took place in 1828–29, only two sculptors took part, but they were Russia's best, S. I. Galberg and B. I. Orlovsky, the winner. The official intention was to commemorate Kutuzov as the supreme leader of the Russian armies in 1812, and Barclay de Tolly as "the conqueror of Napoleon and liberator of Europe." Accordingly, "1812" appears on Kutuzov's pedestal while "1812, 1813, 1814, 1815" are engraved on Barclay's. Cf. *Istoriia russkogo isskustva* (Moscow 1964), vol. VIII, pp. 413–420.

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position was to praise Barclay in order to praise the Tsar. (As far as "The Commander" was concerned, this would seem to mean overlooking Pushkin's lines on Alexander, "*whose mind was shrewd enough to be exempt*" from the mob's execration but "*found it more politic to join them in contempt.*") At the end of his "Explanation" in *The Contemporary*, Pushkin had made another demonstration of his fairmindedness by printing the first three of five stanzas of a hitherto unpublished poem he had written in 1831, "In The Shadow of The Commander (V *ieni* Polkovodtsa)", the commander in this case being Kutuzov. To Pushkin's surprise, the publication of this eulogy was soundly rebuked by the editor of the semi-official *Northern Bee* (11 January 1837), who liked "The Commander" very much because it indirectly supported "divine autocracy." Barclay's strategy had the approval of Alexander I and thus, ultimately, the Tsar was the saviour of Russia. However, this kind of casuistry probably made few converts.

A recent discovery in Russian archives has again stirred up the controversy regarding Pushkin's attitudes respectively to Barclay and Kutuzov.[11]

In a private album belonging to the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna (the wife of Grand Duke Michael, younger brother of Tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I), Pushkin had penned in "The Commander." The Grand Duchess, a former Princess of Württemberg, was a cultured intelligent woman, interested in history, science, and the arts, who, to compensate for her loneliness amidst the Romanovs, befriended the leading Russian writers of the period, including Pushkin. Nicholas called her the family *savante*, Michael shunned all that pleased her—the only musical instrument he could tolerate was the drum—but between her and Pushkin there was a relationship of trust. In her album Pushkin had written out "The Commander" with a quatrain replacing the two lines of ellipsis marks that appeared in the published version in *The Contemporary:*

> *In vain! Your rival reaped the triumph early planted*
> *In your high mind; and you, forgotten, disenchanted,*
> *The sponsor of the feast, drew your last breath,*
> *Despising us, it may be, in the hour of death.*

The first lines of the quatrain are significant. Here for the first time Pushkin spoke slightingly of Kutuzov. "In these lines", writes I. T. Trofimov, the scholar who made the discovery, "Pushkin's endeavour to rehabilitate Barclay reaches its apogee."

THE QUESTION of *which* version of "The Commander" Pushkin himself considered *final* is still moot, despite the attention focused on the poem by at least a dozen Soviet scholars during the 1960s. The eminent literary critic Etkind argued in favour of the printed version, principally on the grounds that the quatrain is inferior in quality to the rest of the poem. He explains the two lines of ellipsis marks as providing "an unusually dramatic pause", an intended literary effect. The main argument of the Pushkin scholar Petrunina in favour of the printed version is that the quatrain overemphasises the image of Barclay as victim declaiming against his fate and the people. She also believes Pushkin desired to avoid taking sides in military matters. Trofimov, the finder of the album, holds that the poem should henceforth be printed in its album-version entirety.[12] Although some of those involved in the dispute deny the possibility of Pushkin having dropped the quatrain in print for fear of censorship, none has made the plausible suggestion that he may have done so to spare the feelings of Madame Khitrovo.

Pushkin's noble effort to vindicate Barclay was followed in a small way by two of his famous contemporaries, the poets Vassilii Zhukovskii and Mikhail Lermontov. Here was proof of the unspoken taboo against Barclay. The first had written "A Poet in The Camp of Russian Warriors" wherein he had named twenty-one of the heroes of 1812, with no mention of Barclay; on Pushkin's prompting he tried to repair the oversight by a new poem, "The Anniversary of Borodino."[13] As for Lermontov, he wrote a three-stanza poem (untitled, and unpublished for almost forty years), beginning:

> *Thou man of greatness!*
> *No quittance here is worthy of thy valour. . . .*

This poem, rediscovered only recently, has been definitely identified by the Lermontov specialist Iraklii Andronikov as dedicated to Barclay.[14]

PUSHKIN WAS killed while the Barclay de Tolly controversy was still seething. If he had lived it is tempting to think he might have written an epic poem based on Barclay, perhaps a poetic counterpart to Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Pushkin did conceive of Barclay as "a highly poetical figure." But by itself "The Commander" cannot offset the effect of Tolstoy's masterly mis-

[11] In 1969 a series of 19th-century personal records held in the Central State Archives of the October Revolution (Leningrad) became accessible to scholars.

[12] Efim Etkind, "Stikhotvorenie Pushkina 'Polkovodets'; opyt interpretatsii", *Rossiia-Russia*, No. 2, (Turin, 1975), p. 170. Petrunina, p. 299. Trofimov, p. 188.

[13] V. A. Zhukovskii, *Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow, 1959), vol. I, pp. 149–167, 400–402.

[14] Iraklii Andronikov, *Lermontov; isledovania i nakhodki* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 88–89.

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representation. Waves of xenophobia again and again have washed out the chances of a true rehabilitation of Barclay among the Russian people. Between waves, however, scholars both Tsarist and Soviet have tried to render him his due, and among these there is hardly a one who has not referred to "The Commander."

At the time when Pushkin's poem was eliciting the polemicists' wrath, it is significant that no one seemed to be excited about the unveiling (in December 1837) of the Kutuzov and Barclay statues before Our Lady of Kazan. Monuments in stone, as Pushkin knew, are but a cold substitute for the rapt and loving contemplation of poets and people.[15]

Barclay's fate—to serve his country and his countrymen and to reap disgrace, then glory, but never the reward of simple heartfelt recognition—is illumined by Pushkin's "The Commander" as it can never be by half-a-dozen monuments in stone or in bronze set here and there between Leningrad and Regensburg's Walhalla Hall.

Luckless commander! Ah, your fate was bitter gall:
To alien soil in sacrifice you brought your all.
By gaze of savage ignorance unpenetrated,
You strode alone. . . .

[15] There is no memorial in Moscow, though there is a short street in the Kiev district of Moscow named Barclay de Tolly Street. Statues of Barclay and Bagration were finally to be erected on the monument-scattered field at Borodino, according to a government decree of 1962 to celebrate the 150th anniversary. Eight years later, however, they had not appeared and I do not know at this writing whether they are yet in sight.

Scream and Variations

When I came into the world I saw

My face in my mother's blood
And my father crying where he stood

A garden where a girl teased a man,
A man listened to a girl complain,
A boy wondered what a man could mean.

A house where children's voices rang,
Where tiredness lived for each evening,
Where a wife needed to be among
Friends and kids and a husband stayed wrong.

A party smiling for a photograph,
One choking on the length of his life,
Another ready to raise tears for a laugh,
One death harvested with a knife,
Doors closing on a broken belief.

An ecologist painting Doomsday
For ten million watchers; tragedy
In the newspapers and poetry
In the schools; all style in a lie
And truth a shapeless story,
The lark ascending a poisoned sky.

My coffin in an unknown place
Among enemies and the police;
My daughters trying to please
Me in dreams with their replies;
A tear belonging to my wife ablaze
In the darkness of widowhood; peace
In her voice but only death's applause.

Myself in the world is all there was.

Peter Porter

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PRESS

Max Ascoli, of *The Reporter*

By Douglass Cater

WITHIN A WEEK OR SO after John F. Kennedy's Inaugural, I arranged for Max Ascoli, my Editor on *The Reporter*, to pay him a visit. William Walton, artist and long-time crony of the President, told me that all I need do was telephone Evelyn Lincoln, Kennedy's secretary, and suggest a get-together. To my delight, Mrs Lincoln promptly suggested lunch for the three of us the very next day—which was a Friday. Alas, Max was suffering one of his frequent indispositions. To my surprise Mrs Lincoln phoned back to renew the invitation for the following Monday.

On that day, due to airport misadventures in Max's trip from New York, we entered the Red Room of the Mansion only minutes before the President was due to meet us. As we waited, a sudden impish impulse provoked me to remark to Max, "Kennedy will want to know why you criticised his Inaugural Address." For, almost alone amid the paeans with which editors had greeted the Inaugural, Max had sounded a discordant note in the pages of *The Reporter*. It had something to do with JFK's laying it on too thick with his multiple pledges to mankind. Max assured me that the President would not be so impolite as to mention this, but I noted that he looked a bit apprehensive.

The President arrived, greeted us cordially, and ushered us into the small dining-room on the first floor. Once seated, he turned directly to Max and said in a tone of mild amusement: "You didn't like my Inaugural." It was delivered not as an accusation but simply as a fact to be examined coolly and dispassionately.

Max, though visibly disconcerted, was masterful in responding to this challenge from the nation's new Chief Executive. His reply was to the effect: "Mr President, I come from Italy where rhetoric has been the curse of politics. I am perhaps overly allergic to rhetoric."

It was Kennedy's turn to be disconcerted, but he, too, was up to the occasion: "By your standards, how would you judge Lincoln's Gettysburg Address?"

Max could have simply observed that there were exceptions to prove any rule. But no, he stuck valiantly to the ideal he had set for himself. "I have never liked that either", he replied stoically. "All those words about 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people.' What do they really mean?"

This was enough to bring the exchange to an abrupt halt and launch the luncheon on a faltering course. Kennedy remained the model of courtesy to this older man who held such fundamentalist views about the use of language—even though Max himself never completely mastered the American idiom and was capable of inventive metaphors ("my dish of tea" and "selling like wildcakes", and once, after hiring a new editor, "Now we're no longer underhanded"). For the remainder of the meal we talked of other matters. I recall Kennedy's complaint that Eisenhower had not given him adequate forewarning of the desperate situation in Laos and Viet Nam. On that wintry afternoon in 1961 we felt a bone chill for this young President, confronted with a predicament that might bring Chinese troops swarming into territory for which he had not even begun to define an American responsibility.

MAX ASCOLI died on 1 January, aged 79, after years of physical ailment which make Job's plight appear mild by comparison. But this unusual man devoted the prime of his career to editing a fortnightly magazine which over nearly two decades set high standards for political journalism in America. Max was editor, publisher, owner, and overlord of *The Reporter*. He gave it an identity as surely as Harold Ross and H. L. Mencken gave identity to *The New Yorker* and *American Mercury*. Foreign-born, he defined a vital strain of Americanism during a critical period of America's history. *The Reporter* was launched in the early summer of 1949. This was six months before Joe McCarthy's demagogic kick-off at Wheeling, West Virginia, but the seeds of McCarthyism were already freely blowing in the political atmosphere. *The Reporter* went out of business in the late spring of 1968, its demise finally triggered by Lyndon Johnson's announcement of his own political demise.

The Reporter began as a militant foe of the cynical anti-Communism represented by McCarthy and earned its credentials for investigative journalism long before that term was invented by the press. It gained status and circulation successes—compared, that is, to other liberal periodicals of much older vintage—growing by leaps each time it brought forth a tirelessly researched exposé on "the China Lobby"

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(revealing Chiang Kai-shek's manipulations in Washington, DC), "the Wire Tappers" (an early prophetic look at the use of technology to threaten civil liberties), "the Lie Detectors" (about the use of technology to measure a man's loyalty), and "the Far-Flung Constituents of Styles Bridges" (revealing the dubious patrons of one of the Senate's most powerful members). Though essentially serious—to the point of solemnity—*The Reporter* was capable of sorties into satire, notably through the contributions of Marya Mannes and Meg Greenfield and the occasional pieces by William Lee Miller ("Piety Along The Potomac" and "Some Negative Thoughts About Norman Vincent Peale").

The Reporter could not be convicted of "knee-jerk liberalism." Despite his profound fear of incipient fascism in American politics—a fear given meaning by growing up in a country which had gone fascist—Max never allowed his printed pages to yield to hysteria. He detected strong roots for freedom in America. He had a deep admiration for men of action in politics which often over-shadowed his own discipline in the world of the intellect. He had, for example, a hard struggle to bring himself to support Adlai Stevenson in 1952—and even harder in 1956. Something about Stevenson stirred Max's intuitions about the intellectual's penchant for indecisiveness. Max might just possibly have become an Ike enthusiast except that he detested the dogmatic certitudes of John Foster Dulles.

Max had less success in maintaining enduring friendships with male writers. *The Reporter's* history is littered with those who flourished and then for one reason or another broke off the relationship. The reason often cited was that they "could not get along with Max." He was accused of eccentricity, excessive egotism, and tyrannical treatment of those whose copy failed to meet his measure. There were faults on both sides of these controversies. Well-known and brilliant contributors were frequently capable of trying to pass off shoddy goods. Max seemed congenitally incapable of displaying the diplomatic touch in dealing with the second-rate, even when submitted by friends. And he was quite capable of bearing grudges, often with great relish.

My own working relationship with him persisted for more than 15 years on *The Reporter* where I began as a researcher fresh out of graduate school and ended in 1964 when I joined the White House staff of Lyndon Johnson. Those were valuable years for me; Max taught me more about the meaning of intellectual curiosity than I ever acquired at Harvard. We had moments of high tension when he applied the squiggly line of his blue pencil—meaning "no good"—alongside precious paragraphs of my copy. In retrospect, I believe he was right most of the time. I came to share his contempt for cliché, for verbiage, for over-blown metaphors and florid adjectives. We vowed to try to maintain George Orwell's passion for the purity of language.

ASCOLI was born in 1898 of a distinguished Jewish family living in Ferrara, Italy. He trained in political philosophy and the law, wrote studies of Georges Sorel and Benedetto Croce, and came to the US in the early 1930s on a Rockefeller Fellowship, wearing the brand of a "premature anti-fascist." He suffered poverty during his early years in America while establishing an eminent place among the intellectual refugees from Europe, first at Columbia University and later among the founders of the New School for Social Research. He was a handsome man—for those who measure looks by the strength of facial features: a strikingly high and massive forehead, a jutting jaw accentuating a remarkably forceful mouth. Even the thick lenses which distorted the size of his eyes contributed to the overall impression of strength and penetration. Max had a distinctive charm which seldom failed to escape the notice of handsome women. His most successful efforts in developing new writing talent for *The Reporter* were among the female contributors. And of course he was highly successful in his marriage of nearly four decades to Marion Rosenwald.

ONE REASON why our relationship endured and grew into deep friendship, while other staff associates were less fortunate, was Max's decision after only a few months to make me the magazine's Washington Editor. It meant that our dialogues took place by telephone, which proved a remarkably effective medium for filtering out personality conflicts while permitting an intimacy which was reinforced by frequent visits. Our conversations took place on Sunday evenings, after we had digested the week's events. I, though much his junior, had the advantage of flesh-and-blood contact with the politics being played out in the nation's capital. He, living in New York, had an insatiable curiosity for the significant detail as well as an intuitive capacity for applying an organising principle to the march of events. We developed a spoken shorthand by which we could cover a wide universe in a brief time. We even had habitual code words—some might call them clichés—for summing up that universe. "At a certain moment" was one phrase I recall long before John Dean immortalised "at that point in time."

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WHAT I REMEMBER most keenly was Max's great love for his adopted country. He never considered himself a foreign spectator. He was a "born-again" American, capable of participating fully in the passions of our politics.

During its best years, Max steered *The Reporter* with considerable skill through the treacherous shoals of journalistic predictability. Believing that a liberal periodical should be "independent and surprising", he supported investigative projects of a cost and duration which made them highly uneconomic. *The Reporter* lost money throughout its lifetime and thus could be dismissed as a rich man's hobby—except that no other political journal devoted to serious reporting provided a model for financial success. It never seemed to trouble Max that good journalism should require this form of subsidy. He was not willing to settle for low-cost articles of "opinion" to substitute for the more costly articles of "facts and ideas."

Measured by other than financial yardsticks, I would argue that *The Reporter* at its prime was a tremendous success. Its subscribership, reaching at the peak more than 200,000, may seem small compared to the tens of millions who were purchasing *Life* and *Look*. Yet I once had an article published in *Look* which evoked not one single comment from friend or foe; on the other hand, I felt a steady feed-back from *The Reporter* readers. They were a self-selected élite of thinking people, strategically distributed throughout the country. Even today, nearly a decade after its last issue, I run into nostalgic fans in the most far away outposts. In the publishing field small can be powerful as well as beautiful.

I HAVE MENTIONED that from the founding of *The Reporter* Max suffered a succession of maladies. These began during the magazine's planning stages when on the day of the celebrated Italian elections of 1948 he tripped and broke his hip. This robust man was gradually reduced to an invalid, and towards the end it had an effect on the magazine; there was, in my opinion, a perceptible hardening of its journalistic arteries. *The Reporter* became more predictable and even repetitious.

I have never been quite sure why Max became more hard-line than many hard-liners in government toward the American commitment in Viet Nam. In earlier years *The Reporter* had been fiercely critical of the Asia Firsters. Our major exposé of the China Lobby had dealt mercilessly with those who were attempting to manipulate the US into mainland involvement in Asia. While Max had stoutly supported Truman's Korean commitment, he was equally stout in criticising MacArthurian adventurism. But as the Viet Nam war dragged on, Max appeared to equate our escalating involvement with America's capacity to be true to its own ideals. If he shared the soul-searching which took place even in the highest councils of government, the pages of *The Reporter* failed to reflect this. Instead, the magazine tended to become shrill and lost the interest of many of its earlier supporters.

Those were gloomy days for Max. My dealings with him were infrequent, for we both respected the fact that my allegiance to the President prevented the old intimacies, but I knew that the combination of bad health and political frustration had brought him to profound depression. This spurred me to bring together my present and former bosses, LBJ and Max, in the hope that they would find some solace in talking things over. Johnson had always shown great respect for Max's integrity and agreed to my proposal.

THE MEETING, which took place in mid-March of 1968, was a disaster deserving a small footnote in the annals of those tragic times.

I had scheduled it for 10.30 am on a Saturday morning, hoping it would be a relaxed time in the President's schedule and might even lead to one of LBJ's spur-of-the-moment luncheon invitations. Max flew down from New York, visibly in ill health. I believe he had convinced himself that something constructive would result from a heart-to-heart exchange with the President.

I sent word to the Appointments Secretary that the President's guest had arrived. And then the waiting began. Minutes lengthened into hours, and my queries revealed that the President had gone off in his limousine on an unspecified mission. No one knew when he planned to return. Johnson could be quite cavalier with his schedule, but this was my first experience with such total irresponsibility. As a desperate stalling device, I summoned one Presidential Assistant after another to pass the time with Max. But he was wise to my gambit and made little effort to keep up his side of the conversation. Lunchtime arrived and he declined my invitation to share a meal in the White House Mess. We were reduced to silence as he grimly awaited the call to the Oval Office.

It was nearly three o'clock that afternoon when the call came. With relief bordering on euphoria, I escorted Max upstairs, turned him over to the Appointments Secretary, saw the door swing open into the Oval Office, and rushed back to my own office to catch up on other duties. I was barely seated when the inter-com buzzed and the mystified secretary informed me that Dr Ascoli was ready to leave. Only after he had departed, tight-lipped and trembling, did I piece

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together the details of what had happened.

Max had entered the Oval Office, bowed low to LBJ, and declared, "Mr President, I thank you for your courtesy in receiving me. Now I will leave you to your more pressing responsibilities." He wheeled and walked back through the doorway without waiting for a reply.

In hindsight, I recognise that both men were going through their separate agonies. Only days later, the President made his surprise announcement that he would not be a candidate for re-election (a surprise to me and to almost every other member of his personal staff). That night, I have since learned, Max declared privately that he could not continue the burden of publishing *The Reporter*.

Some time later, Max phoned to give me advance notice of his plans to fold the magazine. Almost tearfully, he related that Johnson's "abdication of responsibility"—for this was his severe judgment—had made him realise that he himself lacked the stamina to carry his editorial burden. Why had he not made an effort to find fresh ownership to perpetuate *The Reporter*? I put the question to him, knowing full well that at least two potential patrons had approached him. Max replied by citing the experience of *The American Mercury* which he felt had been "vulgarised" after H. L. Mencken departed.

After that, Max entered his silent years. I saw him from time to time and found him a saddened man. But the final frustrating period dims in my memory when I remember his creative years as a great editor.

The Conservatory

"Hello?" whispers the boy. But the bird
says nothing, and opens one brilliant eye
to stare him out, ignoring the bars,
the thick luxurious plants, to find
my face looming behind the window
watching him wait. Here it is cold;

the colourless sun declines, and frost
fixes the tracks of single walkers
headed through shadows for home.
Imagine the company there—
the fires which burn in terraces
warming those chairs, that circle

of features set against loneliness.
District by district comes clear:
its settlements founded on marriage
and time for talk, where soon,
past curtains drawn back to frame
each safe civility, I must approach

my empty room, with lamps outside
describing a life beyond my reach
and somewhere, hidden from sight,
the small bird awake under glass,
calling its own human name over
and over to silence as darkness falls.

Andrew Motion

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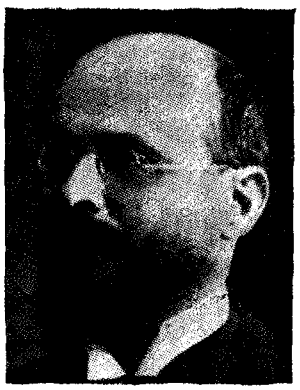
NOTES & TOPICS

The Scholar as Hero

Gaetano Salvemini

By Denis Mack Smith



ALTHOUGH today, twenty years after his death, Gaetano Salvemini can be recognised as one of the great Italians of his time, he was too much a nonconformist and individualist to receive much acclaim while still alive. His uncompromising fight against Fascism and Communism had made him powerful enemies, and his many criticisms of Italian society were in effect a provocative condemnation of both the liberal and the Christian-democrat establishment. Though he preferred Christian Democracy to Communism, he caused resentment by arguing that religion as practised in Italy had retarded the nation's political education. On similar grounds he challenged Benedetto Croce, the "lay Pope" of liberal Italy, whom he accused of having misled several generations of intellectuals with rhetorical abstractions far removed from the urgent question of how to make Italy a truly liberated and civilised country.

Salvemini's pragmatic mind had no patience with rhetoric, and here he parted company even with the liberal socialists to whose party he briefly belonged. In his view one of the main reasons why Italy was in some ways backward and perilously poised on the edge of revolution was the preference for discussing general theories rather than practical problems. Another reason was that too many sacred cows were usually beyond criticism. Apart from Croce and the Church, another target that others thought in bad taste to criticise was what he called the national vice of megalomania, and yet this exaggerated patriotism had produced a series of disasters of which Fascism was only one. As late as 1946 the country's political leaders, Alcide De Gasperi and Carlo Sforza, were deceived by national vanity into wanting to restore Italy's colonial empire, whereas Salvemini thought it obvious that colonial enterprises, far from increasing the nation's wealth and prestige, had in fact greatly diminished both. When an earlier generation of Italian colonialists in 1911 forged documents to support their case, he exposed the fraud in a brilliant piece of detective work; but successive governments went on insisting that Italy had an urgent need for areas of settlement in Africa, ignoring or at least concealing his criticism that the colonies could absorb only several hundred immigrants a year. As he used to say, "if only resources had gone to building schools instead of an empire, Italy might have become a front-rank instead of a third-class nation. . . ."

ACCORDING TO SALVEMINI, this was one example of many fraudulent legends that had been concocted with the intention of inflating national self-esteem but in practice had almost the opposite effect. One such legend tried to make Italians believe that they were rich enough to emulate German imperialism. Another maintained that national unification in the 19th century was an unmitigated boon to southern as well as northern regions of Italy. A third had it that the prefectoral system imposed by northerners on the rest of the country had helped the progress of liberalism. Such myths, however well intentioned, could be shown to be greatly damaging, but few people were sufficiently eccentric or brave enough to question them.

SO DEEP-ROOTED were some of the patriotic falsifications that not even Salvemini could altogether escape being deceived. One example is his acceptance of the current fiction about the destruction of the Austrian Army by the Italians at the battle of Magenta in 1859. Such an illusion led to an unfortunate overestimation of national strength and patriotism, whereas Magenta was a purely French victory in which no Italians at all were killed except those who fought on the Austrian side. That such a fact could be forgotten and cleverly turned into its opposite helps to explain the megalomania that Salvemini found so dangerous. But at least he did not try to discover in military success the chief glories of the national heritage. He believed that Italy in the 19th century could boast only four men of genius—Leopardi, Cattaneo, Cavour, and De Sanctis. The fact that he omitted from this number some of the conventionally accepted national heroes (for instance, Mazzini and Manzoni) was an unacceptable

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affront to those brought up on the standard orthodoxy of university and school textbooks.

Another disastrous legend told how Italy was cheated of her due at Versailles in 1919, and this invention helped Mussolini justify a belligerent foreign policy that the country was far too poor to sustain. Here, too, Salvemini exposed the illusory "facts" on which the nationalists built their claim to annex large areas in the Balkans and Asia Minor. He also demonstrated with ample chapter and verse that the Fascists, far from rescuing Italy from a Bolshevist revolution in 1919–22, had merely invented this supposed danger to win conservative support.

At one point he had seen some facts in favour of Mussolini, because like others he was at first taken in by the promise of a new deal; and he feared that the possible alternatives might be even worse. But he soon realised with horror that Mussolini's was a régime without ideas or principles, based on the conquest of power by means of terrorism and assassination. From that moment onwards he dedicated himself to the one task of opposition, at first as editor of a clandestine periodical, then as a political prisoner, and finally as an exile.

HE WAS SMUGGLED into France in 1925 by some of his university pupils, among them Federico Chabod. The only luggage he could take was a single bag full of documents implicating Mussolini in various crimes (documents that he later gave to the LSE library). All his other property was confiscated by the fascists, including his future royalties. Also his latest book on the history of foreign policy was destroyed in proof by official order. This was recognition that such a man, who unlike others could be neither bribed nor terrorised, had after the killing of Matteotti become the most dangerous of all the enemies of the régime. Outside the range of fascist censorship and bludgeons he might do "untold harm."

SALVEMINI WAS NO stranger to personal tragedy, and many years earlier he had suffered a personal catastrophe when his wife and all five children were killed in the great Messina earthquake (1908). But the sudden loss of job, possessions, and pension, to say nothing of friends and country, would have broken the spirit of a lesser man.

At the age of over fifty he had to learn a new language so as to scrape a bare living in England and America. Convinced that Fascism would eventually fall not through internal opposition but because of world opinion, and knowing that one of Mussolini's vulnerable points was criticism abroad, he made this his full-time occupation. Nor was it easy for an almost penniless exile with just a few friends to counter the stream of fascist propaganda that poured out of the Italian embassy in London (the account-book of the embassy has since come to light and tells which British journalists were being paid). Working in the British Museum he built up a huge dossier on fascist cruelties and illegalities. He took particular pleasure in showing by comparative figures from 1921–22 that neither strikes nor train services were worse in Italy than elsewhere; and subsequently he exposed some of the nonsense that was circulating about the "Corporative System" and fascist achievements in welfare and public works.

How successful he was in persuading people is hard to say. He could hardly appeal to the orthodox Left so long as he denied that Fascism could be explained in terms of the class struggle, and so long as he pointed out the similar cruelties and persecution in Soviet Russia. Nor could he make much headway with those who saw Mussolini, villain or no, as an ally against Stalin or Hitler. Nor could he easily convince those foreigners who had ruefully watched Croce and all the other liberals vote for Fascism, and who concluded that democracy just would not work in Italy. But his books were bought and he was much in demand as a public speaker. By sheer persistence (he was an indefatigable letter-writer to the press) he made the point that Italy, far from being the same as Fascism, had been subdued in a bloody civil war by a gang of ruthless men. Italians, he insisted, were quite different from their reputation abroad:

> "Italians are a hard working and profoundly moral people, yet they possess little political sense. They are docile but at the same time indomitable. Though lively and animated in outward appearance, they are *sentimentalmente freddo*. No more dishonest than other peoples, they are less clever than is usually believed. They are temperamentally sad rather than happy, indifferent in matters of religion, hampered by the great poverty of their country, but intellectually rich through three thousand years of civilisation. . . ."

Salvemini at last found a permanent job when a lectureship at Harvard was endowed for him by the American actress, Ruth Draper. The Italian embassy in Washington tried and failed to prevent his entry to America and then to block his appointment (the allegation, without evidence, was that he had attempted to kill the Duce).

But once at Harvard he found that in the Widener library he could study Italian history far better than anywhere in Italy, so he reverted with delight to his real profession, that of a teacher of history. His earliest writings in the 1890s had included a classic study of 13th-century Florence and the editing of a Medieval Latin text. Two

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later volumes on the French Revolution and on Mazzini are today still in print seventy years after they were written; and English translations of both of them have recently enjoyed great and justified success. At Harvard he set himself to work on recent diplomatic history; but his last book, *Prelude to World War II*, while as readable as his others, was too angry and pungent to be entirely convincing.

If only he had not been diverted by circumstance into politics, he would have been better equipped than anyone, even than Croce, to explain recent history to a wide Italian audience. Some of his friends hoped to persuade the next generation to forget the past as being too sad and divisive, but Salvemini was sure that such an obscurantist attitude was one of the root causes of Italy's tragedy. For too long the conventionally accepted myths about the *Risorgimento* had led people into one disaster after another. The most useful task for a real patriot would be to investigate what had gone wrong and then ensure that the new generation knew more of the answers and had the courage to face them. By not knowing their own history Italians had deprived themselves of the self-knowledge needed if they were ever to do justice to their great talents. "If only" the communists knew more history, they might one day see the folly of preaching revolution and become genuine gradualists, with results that would be greatly beneficial. "If only" Croce could realise that Fascism had not been an inexplicable "parenthesis" in Italian history but rather emerged out of what had gone before, he would have been caught less off his guard by the events of 1922 and might have helped others to understand what was happening before it was too late.

Salvemini rendered his last and perhaps most valuable service by helping people to understand. Admittedly he often seemed too polemical, too dogmatic, too moralistic; and yet those who knew him personally and not through his books have called him the most open-minded and undogmatic man they had ever known. He never believed that historians should pretend to objectivity. Nor did he ever hesitate to call a rogue a rogue. All good history books, he said, were biased in one way or another, and this was perfectly acceptable so long as the historian knew and confessed his own bias and did not conceal the evidence on the other side. "Impartiality is either a delusion of the simple-minded, or a banner of the opportunist and the dishonest." Intellectual honesty was far more important than objectivity.

GAETANO SALVEMINI is, two decades after his death in Sorrento at the age of 82, remembered for his intellectual honesty, but also for his lack of worldly ambition, for his courage and boisterous

James Fenton

writes . . .

'Speaking at a meat-processing factory in Dyce during her recent, and apparently not very successful, Scottish tour, Mrs Thatcher told the management: "My family love sausages. That sort of food is ideal for a person who lives the kind of life I do." This is the new Mrs Thatcher – soft, sexy, sausage-scoffing, sensitive to the hopes and aspirations of those she meets. In another context, for instance in her own constituency, she might have kept the sausages under her hat. But up in Aberdeenshire (or down in Aberdeenshire, if you insist) she was at liberty to reveal all. I imagine that Gordon Reece, the EMI executive who has been hired as her image-builder, and who was with her on the trip, would have been proud of the effort. "Listen, darling," I can hear him saying it, "you've got to *think sausage*. You've got to *ooze* with sausage-appeal. You've got to get inside the skin of it – you've got to be every inch a sausage." And Mrs Thatcher obliged.'

James Fenton writes on politics every week in the

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good humour in the face of adversity. He will continue to be remembered as a scholar,[1] and also as a great liberal, an enemy of all totalitarianism whether of Right or Left. He was at once a patriot and an internationalist, an enemy of hypocrisy and pretentiousness, and above all a great educator.

It is not only Italians who still have much to learn from him.

[1] See Ernesto Sestan (ed.), *Atti del Convegno su Gaetano Salvemini (Firenze 9–10 November 1975)*, Il Saggiatore (Milan, 1977).

Where Have All the Young Maos Gone?

Letter from Paris—By OLIVIER TODD

RECONCILED and unafraid, the two main French Maoist organisations, the Communist - Leninist Party of France and the Revolutionary Communist Party (Marxist - Leninist), have just concluded a solemn electoral agreement. A few years ago you could count our Maoist militants in their tens of thousands. Today their hardcore membership is a few hundred at best, and their newspapers—now with fewer pages and smaller format—ooze with the uncertainty of a stilted and increasingly convoluted language.

Power no longer comes out of the barrel of the Little Red Book. The Chinese myths and dreams are fading faster than the Soviet legends. Mao's post-mortem has come more quickly than Stalin's. In the field of foreign policy our puzzled Maoists are racking their brains about a China which makes deals with Pinochet's Chile. In the field of domestic policy the last Western Maoists are finding it hard to take the elimination of the "Gang of Four" in Peking—and tactfully they declare that this purge is "disquieting"....

The quest for a "correct" revolutionary line is really complicated. How do you make an overall analysis of the world situation and set limits to an interlocking alliance system? In private doubt, if not in public sorrow, one Maoist news-sheet sides with the Cambodian Marxists against the Vietnamese Communists. Yet it senses that regional nationalisms are taking precedence over proletarian internationalism. In 1978 our apprentice Maoists, with no firm grounding in China, no real constituency here, are slithering towards what they themselves like to call the dust-bin of history.

In 1960, already disgusted with the official Left (a discredited Socialist Party and a Stalinist CP), Jean-Paul Sartre was saying of the young: "Let us tell them—be Cubans. Be Russians or Chinese as your judgment tells you! Be Africans!..." Along the road to a temptation of an idealised totalitarian Orient, Sartre was picking up where André Malraux left off. Wasn't Régis Debray Cuban? A certain number of young French people came to believe themselves to be Chinese.

A little before (and for a long time after) May 1968, this Good China (the bad one was confined to Formosa) represented the principle of hope, the revolutionary utopia. It symbolised a whole assortment of things—the conquest of hunger (the daily bowl of rice for all), an egalitarian society (students and peasants hand in hand, barefoot doctors), a Hundred Flowers (the permanent criticism of bureaucracies), and above all the emergence of the Third World as a political force.

MAO was Stalin and Lenin combined, the foremost non-European Marxist (or so it was thought). The Paris Left was beginning to realise that the nearby USSR was a Police State, and even to suspect its economic inefficiency. *Le Grand Schisme* enabled the Maoists to apply an old and simple political principle—our enemies' enemies are our friends....

In France the passion for theory all too often gets the better of the enthusiasm for facts. It was easier to browse through left-wing Left-bank bookshops than to visit Tibet, and the commonplaces of "Mao Tse-tung's Thought" were an easy fashionable substitute for the posters of Che or the rhetoric of Frantz Fanon. It was more comfortable to live a Chinese dream-life by proxy than to be French; and there was an attempt to transplant the tactics of the Great Helmsman, a tough long march to undertake: the Sorbonne students marching blithely towards the future were unfortunately just too few to "encircle"

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Renault. The occasional punch-ups *très à la mode* turned out not to be as popular as had been thought. Maoist trade unionism lapsed into confusion: the awkward fact is that the workers and peasants did not quite understand what it was all about.

ONE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR had the helpful notion of simply dissolving the "*Gauche Prolétarienne*." Without drifting into organised terrorism, it had been dabbling in a little gun-play. Alain Geismar and Michel Le Bris did time in prison. Pierre Overney was disgracefully murdered. At last the repression there had been all that talk about.... Was this what they had been longing for? This fraction of a generation had not fought for Republican Spain or even taken part in the fight against Nazism (now dubbed fascism). It felt guilty about France's colonial wars. Trying hard to over-compensate, it invented a "New Popular Resistance." To the amusement of the citizenry, it painted the "horror of a new SS." An overwhelming majority of the still cool-headed French proletariat knew perfectly well that the bosses were not occupying the country in the 1970s as the German armed forces had done in the 1940s. It was becoming more and more difficult to work on behalf of the vanguard of a proletariat which disclaimed you when it was not ignoring you. The Maoists learned the hard way that the experiences of the Chinese CP were no more "*universalisable*" than those of the Russian CP.

Deep into the practices of permanent self-criticism, more faction-ridden and theological than ever the Trotskyists, the Maoist organisations dissolved into fissiparity, while their support from Peking dwindled to next to nothing (their finances remain very much a mystery).

HAS THE LEFT ever produced so strange a creature? Maoist *normaliens*, with a penchant for abstraction, yoked Louis Althusser and Mao together, and added Spinoza and Marx. The resulting texts are dogmatic and inept. Naturally their circulation had its effect: intellectual fashion is prepared to accept a certain logorrhoea provided that it is not too repetitive. On the other hand these Maoists—pure, romantic, hard, and at heart more Rousseauist than Leninist—in a strange way also constituted the most "concrete" sector of the Left. They were genuinely concerned (it is their honour and our debt) with the immigrants, assembly-line work, pollution, abortion.

When he was a minister, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing was not the last to appreciate the themes of Jean-Luc Godard's *La Chinoise*. The Maoist monks took jobs in factories. Sometimes they even went out into the fields, where they either disappeared or came back with precious novels and lyrical essays. Those who did not go into literature were now facing a fearsome weapon: information. Various men and women who had the advantage over them of having seen China and of speaking Chinese—Jean Pasqualini, for example—were describing a sinister reality. What, was there *univers concentrationnaire*, a camp world of the Gulag Archipelago, in China too? Is it really not absolutely certain that all Chinese can eat their fill, that poverty has been conquered, that a New Man has been born?

The *coup de grâce* was given to the Maoists by the reversals of Chinese policy towards the United States and Yugoslavia and by the new French Socialist Party, which took away from the "revisionists" of the Communist Party their monopoly of serious opposition; and having absorbed into itself an element of leftist dissidence it is also closer to power. The Maoist newspapers ritually denounce Mitterrand. The few Maoist election candidates have been asking for a national guaranteed minimum wage—of 2,500 francs, a paltry advance on the 2,400 francs of the Communist and Socialist parties.

Where are the militants of yesteryear? Where have all the young Maos gone?

Strategy of Survival

What can be done to check the Russian advances in Africa and elsewhere which continue to produce new 'client states'? Brian Crozier examines the problem in the context of post-war history and suggests a counter-strategy. (Published by Maurice Temple Smith at £5.50.)

Brian Crozier

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Victims of Circumstance

Alan Ayckbourn's Plays—By GUIDO ALMANSI

"SOMEONE WHO SHALL be nameless . . .": the phrase catches that middle-class philistinism which Alan Ayckbourn's prose so lovingly and sarcastically explores—Penelope Keith uttered it with proper priggishness of feature and voice in the recent television production of *Living Together*. In his plays such periphrases are followed by unequivocal comments concerning unwashed dishes or unemptied ashtrays. I suspect that *someone* who shall be nameless must have spoilt our pleasure and our capacity to think critically about humour, otherwise we would have already become aware of the presence of Ayckbourn as a seriously humorous writer. Humorous and serious: the two adjectives go together, in spite of what your Leavisite Sixth Form Master may have taught you. The invasion of Ayckbourniana in between Shaftesbury Avenue and the South Bank, the massive taking over of TV peak time last autumn and the recent publication of two books, *Three Plays* and *The Norman Conquests*,[1] ought to have induced even the most solemn theatre critic to take his farces very seriously indeed.

A good writer can afford and endure all sorts of human shortcomings: he can be slow-witted, unperceptive, ideologically muddled, psychologically obtuse—names and addresses only for *bona fide* scholars. He can also be humourless, long-winded and sentimentally gooey. It is not common for a really good writer to summon up all these negative qualities, though such instances are not unheard of. In the normal course of events, however, one would not expect a first-class writer to be deprived of all these human frailties. He would display some, hide a few more, and be happily free of the rest. A writer of farce is in a different position altogether. He can certainly be amoral, cynical, unprincipled, or ruthlessly detached both from the gallery of human specimens out of which he draws his models, and from the emotional gamut of his fictive creatures (this hypothetical case certainly does not apply to Ayckbourn). But he is professionally compelled to be intelligent, witty, perceptive, alert, sensitive and, above all, quick: in his pace, mind, action. The shortcomings of the run-of-the-mill psychological novelist or political playwright are denied to him. The farceur is safe in the intellectual rigour of his trade.

He runs a different risk however. He can be trivial. This applies to all and sundry, from Molière to the TV hack. Ayckbourn, like every other writer of farces, does not *always* succeed in avoiding the pitfall of triviality.

AYCKBOURN'S POINTS of departure are most unprepossessing. Not for him the seedy ferment of an angry terraced house, but rather the sleepy atmosphere of a semi-detached, or the sluggish isolation of Annie's decaying mansion in *The Norman Conquests*. Nothing whatsoever seems to have happened or be likely to happen in these venues of mediocrity except the abrasive friction of quotidian boredom and the grinding noise of wear and tear. Out of this unattractive premise and featureless premises, Ayckbourn spins his cobweb of interrelated combinations. Whether or not one accepts him as a serious playwright, there can be little doubt that he stands peerless as an artificer of plots. *Absurd Person Singular* witnesses the rise of one married couple and the decline of another through three successive Christmas Eve Parties in three different houses, while the third couple undergoes a gradual reversal of roles between the dominant male and passive female. *Bedroom Farce* portrays three bedrooms of couples with fixed abodes and fixed beds, while a fourth rambling pair, in their candour and innocence, spread havoc and chaos in all the rooms they happen to visit in their peregrinations one restless night. *Just Between Ourselves*, a farce in three acts which all take place in the derelict garage of a detached house,

[1] *Three Plays. The Norman Conquests.* By ALAN AYCKBOURN. Chatto & Windus, £4.95; £3.00.

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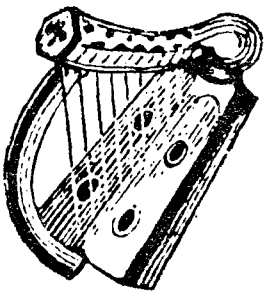

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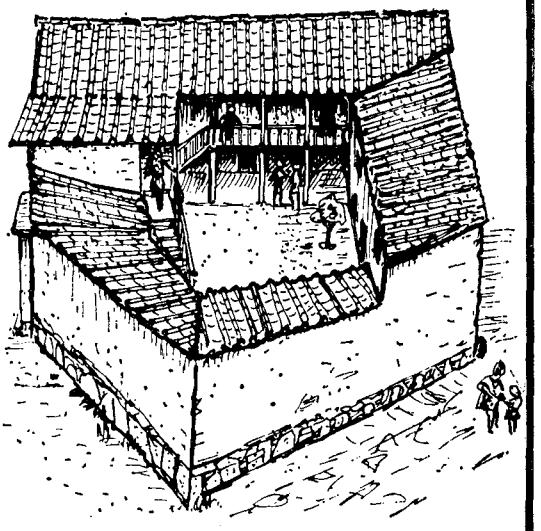

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follows the inevitable downfall in a second-hand car's price, a wife's mental equilibrium, and a friend's bank balance caused by the well-meaning interference of a do-it-yourself little man who is determined to repair fuses, car starters, cracked brains and financial failures with the same screwdriver. And then we have the trilogy, now available to an immensely large audience through the slightly vulgarised television programme: a magical combine whereby three distinct and self-sufficient plays interlock round Norman's marital and extra-marital sallies in order to form an epic saga, *The Norman Conquests,* seen from the angle of the dining-room, the lounge and the garden. Once again we have three couples, Norman and Ruth, Reg and Sarah, Tom and Annie, whose unmemorable adventures are triplicated in three different parts of the same house; and the dove-tailing of the various components has its own mechanical charm. *Table Manners, Living Together* and *Round and Round The Garden* do not run in a sequence, nor are they simultaneous tales, but they progress concurrently on a precise programme, like a railway timetable, which goes as follows:

Round and Round The Garden	Act I Scene 1	Saturday	17.30
Table Manners	Act I Scene 1	Saturday	18.00
Living Together	Act I Scene 1	Saturday	18.30
Living Together	Act I Scene 2	Saturday	20.00
Round and Round The Garden	Act I Scene 2	Saturday	21.00
Table Manners	Act I Scene 2	Sunday	9.00
Round and Round The Garden	Act II Scene 1	Sunday	11.00
Table Manners	Act II Scene 1	Sunday	20.00
Living Together	Act II Scene 1	Sunday	21.00
Table Manners	Act II Scene 2	Monday	8.00
Living Together	Act II Scene 2	Monday	8.00
Round and Round The Garden	Act II Scene 2	Monday	9.00

The Norman Conquests can be read either as three autonomous two-act four-scene plays, all dealing with the same characters and the same plot, and to be enjoyed on different evenings; or as a whole englobing experience including six acts and twelve scenes to be experienced in chronological sequence. A dogged search in the printed versions for some fracture points between the plots yielded me only two moments when the internal sequence within the single play was slightly at variance with the chronological sequence of the saga. In *Living Together*, Act II, Scene I, the calm conversation between Annie and Sarah follows naturally the previous scene of the same play, but not the scene which precedes it in the chronological order of the trilogy (*Table Manners*, Act II, Scene 1). In that scene, which takes place half an hour before, Tom knocks Norman flat. A similar discrepancy can be noticed in Reg's behaviour in *Round and Round the Garden*, Act II, Scene 2, when he is altogether too bouncy and light-hearted in view of the partial revelation of his wife Sarah's adulterous intentions in the final lines of *Living Together*. Otherwise, each scene runs along on the parallel track of its single and triune entity, contributing at the same time to the resolution of the single play and the completion of the trilogy.

Anyone who has attempted combinatory operations of this kind must know that this is no mean achievement. In the introductory note to the printed text of *Relatively Speaking* (Evans Plays, London, 1968), Ayckbourn modestly places himself in the wake of the Shaftesbury Avenue tradition: "I did set out consciously to write a 'well-made' play. I think this is most important for a playwright to do at least once in his life, since as in any science he cannot begin to shatter theatrical convention or break golden rules until he is reasonably sure in himself what they are and how they were arrived at." Notice the odd word: *science*. The playwright mafia who claim moral superiority and greater professional integrity than the critical mob are kindly requested to pay particular attention. But Ayckbourn is placing himself in the wrong company. The laborious attempts of the "well-made" play school of British dramatists to build up a convincing plot round the trivia of middle-class infatuations have little to do with Ayckbourn's structural acrobatics.

IN TERMS OF PLOT UNITY, only Shaw can be compared with Ayckbourn's clockwork combines. If instead we pay attention to the latter's search for a plot to defy all plots, an all-encompassing structure which challenges the limitations of narrative and dramatic equilibrium, then only our medieval ancestors knew such ecstasy and underwent such pangs: the visionary embrace of an *Ars Combinatoria* in which all varieties of human emotions and experiences were resolved in a circular unity; or the labours to control an impossibly difficult form, a structure which was beautified by its defiance of any possible mastery, such as the Provençal *sestina*. The content of an Ayckbourn plot sinks towards the vertiginous banality of *Coronation Street*, but its form soars towards the rarefied atmosphere of an aesthete's aesthetics. Joyce, himself a great reader and devotee of medieval poets and philosophers, knew the heady pleasure of a plot which justifies its existence because of its beauty as a plot. In more recent years, only France

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seems to have nurtured such acolytes of a combinatory mystique. *La disparition* by Georges Pérec, a lipogrammatic novel where what has disappeared is the letter "e" which never occurs in its pages, was dutifully reviewed as a straight novel by a celebrated French critic blissfully unaware of the minor limitation—no use of the letter "e" in the text—that the novelist had set for himself. This bears witness to a fanatic dedication to the cause of narrative experimentation, and Ayckbourn seems to me a writer of the same ilk. The fact that *The Norman Conquests* were also written in order to induce the theatre-goer to buy three tickets instead of one and thus treble the playwright's income is equally true.

Apart from these symmetrical schemes with which the playwright, like a modern Houdini, intentionally fetters his freedom of movement in order to prove his command over the theatrical medium, Ayckbourn seems to exploit two main tactical devices: off-stage character and off-stage action—the latter being in his opinion more difficult to handle than the former. Out of view behind the wings, relatives, friends, pet animals, children are allowed to develop larger-than-life features from the safe abode of their absence on the stage. The *minutiae* of daily unimaginative life, which are the exclusive territory of Ayckbourn's on-stage explorations, are thus enlivened and enriched by the more expansive actions of these threatening ghosts who are entitled to be even more ghastly than the characters we come to know in the course of the plays. In *Absent Friends* Paul makes a firm statement about Gordon, Madge's husband, who never appears on the stage: "Nobody's as big as Gordon." Gordon's wife had already compared her husband to a polythene bag full of water. The horror and ugliness of domestic life, so beautifully portrayed in *Absent Friends*, is belittled by this representative of a greater horror and a more distasteful ugliness. The frequent telephonic interventions of this monster of obesity interrupt the sordid action with his own more sordid details (the cough-mixture has spilt on the bed and on the pyjamas; the hot-water bottle is punctured, and so on). "The old sabre-toothed bat", Mother and Mother-in-law, who looms over the proceedings during the weekend of *The Norman Conquests* from her nest upstairs, affects the emotional life of all the guests in the house, although in the trilogy the playwright is not completely successful in conveying the ominous presence of the invisible character through the reactions of the visible ones. By having all the action in the kitchen, *Absurd Person Singular* spares us the sight of another awful couple, loud-mouthed joke-cracking Dick and Lottie, who are lounging in the unseen drawing-rooms during

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the first two acts; but bestows upon the spectators the vicarious pleasure of hearing that Dick is savagely bitten by another off-stage character, Eva's favourite dog, George, who keeps all her friends unfriendly huddled in the kitchen during the second act by guarding the entrance Cerberus-like. Absent children cast their nasty little shade on the stage in *Mother Figure* (the first sketch of *Confusions,* one of Ayckbourn's most underrated plays) and in *How the Other Half Loves,* where we are continuously fed hair-raising information about Terry's son's devastating activities in the kitchen. Every set is therefore besieged by an aggressive absent figure, be it dog or child or friend or mother-in-law, who contributes to oppress the on-stage characters.

AYCKBOURN'S MOST GENUINE contribution to theatrical technique, however, is his constant recourse to off-stage action. It is like a Velásquez painting which focuses on a peripheral point of reference—the kitchen table with a scullery maid for instance—while the real action is taking place elsewhere in an inconspicuous corner of the canvas. *Absurd Person Singular* shows us a variety of kitchens while parties go on in the lounges. *Bedroom Farce* has three bedrooms, set side by side on the stage, while a festive gathering is roaring underneath one of them. In *Time and Time Again* part of the action occurs on the invisible cricket pitch which witnesses Leonard's defeat and eventual downfall. But the ultimate in off-stage action is of course *The Norman Conquests* in which every single play feeds parasitically on the off-stage action of the other two. As we view the second and then the third play of the trilogy, our awareness of what is going on in the rest of the house and likewise the satisfaction of our curiosity grow concurrently. We enjoy guessing what preceded or what will follow the entrance or the exit of the actor from the garden to the lounge, or from the latter to the kitchen, and we slowly build up a complete picture of the proceedings, as if we were Big Brother enjoying a panoptic and all-embracing vision. I dare surmise that this innovation will count in the future development of theatrical technique.

In farcical plays of this sort it is essential to pitch the action low, down to a base line of utmost banality. The events must ultimately be non-events so as to astonish us with the incomprehensible preoccupations of the characters. The more trifling the occurrences which make the plot move forward, the more hilarious is the shattering effect that these minimal disturbances have upon the emotional lives of our heroes. Trials of strength, tests of character, moral blackmail, psychological pressures, territorial advances or retreats, displays of resistance occur over the adding of milk to a cup of coffee (*Living Together*, I, 2), the purchase of a pair of fancy shoes (*Absent Friends*, Act I), the handing round of sandwiches over tea (both *Absent Friends* and *Just Between Ourselves*).

Look what Ayckbourn manages to extract out of the distribution of seating round the dinner table in *Table Manners*, II, 1 (one of the funniest moments in the trilogy), which becomes both a masterpiece of ceremonial incompetence and the radiography of the power structure of a family group. "I've never pitched anything at such a low key", writes Ayckbourn apropos of *Absent Friends*: but at times all his plays approach a zero degree of action and dialogue. This is at variance with the straight farce tradition in the manner of, say, Feydeau. The typical farce is packed with effervescent dialogue and follows a continuous chain of unexpected events (former or present mistresses appearing or disappearing inside cupboards, jealous husbands pressing at the door either alone or accompanied by their seconds for a duel, visitors turning up unexpectedly from the most unlikely corners of the world to add further confusion, and so on and so forth).

FRANTIC ACTION is only part of the bag of tricks of Ayckbourn, whose plays also thrive on the

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absence of any action and on a dialogue verging on inarticulacy. Evelyn in *Absent Friends* describes her own child in terms which come close to the moronic: "Mmmm"; "Yes"; "He likes it hot"; "He's all right"; "He's not bad", while all the time leafing absent-mindedly through women's magazines. Ayckbourn's fumbling idiots (Trevor in *Bedroom Farce*, Tom in *The Norman Conquests*) delight us not only with their hyperbolic blunders but with the poetical rarefaction of their stuttering language, with the exquisite emptiness of their mindless utterances. "Once you get yourself committed to a . . . commitment—like Susannah and I . . . have committed ourselves to, you get a situation of a totally outgoing—non-egotistical—giving—ness . . . a total submerging, you know" (*Bedroom Farce*, Act I). No, we do not know, but we enjoy the fact that he does not succeed in making us know. "It seems to me—we ought to find a way of—well sort out our relationship—if we have one—to such a degree that we—come together more or less on a permanent basis. Temporarily at least . . . Would you like me to marry you? I would. Like me to marry you. May I?" (*Round And Round*, II, 2). The text not only exploits the traditional figure of the slow-witted timid suitor, but the poetry of a language signifying next to nothing even when it purports to represent a major life decision. "Ah well. I'll think of you, wherever you are, mooching about while I'm mooching about here. . . . Funny thing, life!" (*Round And Round*, I, 1). The philosophical remark at the end, "Funny thing, life!", explodes in all its clamorous incongruity because it operates both as an external reference to Tom's stupidity and shyness, and as a self-reference to its own tautological sufficiency (life is a funny thing because there are people who say: Funny thing, life). The whole tradition of a "Theatre of Chatting" from Chekhov onwards influences Ayckbourn as much as the convention of French farces and British pantomines. Sheila: "There's something so majestic about trees, isn't there?" Greg: "Regal!" (*Relatively Speaking*, I, 2). Madge: "You know me . . . oh, guess what I did get? . . . are you ready? . . . Brace yourself, I got the shoes" (*Absent Friends*, Act I). As Heidegger suggested, people chat in order to demonstrate that they are alive. The characters in Ayckbourn, always on the verge of emptiness in their lives and in their minds, cling persistently to this ephemeral manifestation of existence: chat.

BUT LANGUAGE is a delicate instrument and often turns treacherous, biting the very tongue that has uttered it. Annie: "Norman, do I look

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even remotely fragile?" Norman: "I meant mentally fragile" (*Table Manners*, II, 1). Annie: "You can get as drunk as you like. . . ." Norman: "Oh, great! Would you mind if I dropped dead?" (*Table Manners*, II 1). The whole range of linguistic traps, equivocations, gaffes, unintentional double-entendres, blunders is available to these clumsy manipulators of words. Norman: "What she needs is a bit of the old boot." Tom: "Oh, come on. Boot?" Norman: "Metaphorical." Tom: "Oh, metaphorical boot. What's that exactly?" (*Living Together*, I, 1).

I like that *exactly*, showing the man's terror of words which do not have an *exact* meaning. But language is never exact; on the contrary, it is a constant threat to the pusillanimous characters' diligent attempt to cope with the difficulty of life. At times, language is also an instrument of total falsehood, rising towards peaks of sycophancy. Geoff, the philandering architect, talking about husbands who settle down to a peaceful existence with their wives: "Do you think I don't envy that? . . . God, how I envy them that!" (*Absurd Person Singular*, Act II). Norman: "I'd like to see you happy, Sarah. . . . I'd very much like to make you happy" (*Table Manners*, II, 2). Harry, commenting about the perfume of his *gorgeous* drinking companion: "Very very nice. Very very nice indeed" (*Confusions*, sketch 2). These are occasions when a sequence of trite words has more bite than a well-turned phrase or a brilliant metaphor. Ayckbourn knows how to operate dramatically on what seems to be utterly banal: which is certainly more difficult than the exploitation of the sublime.

My zeal to defend the "seriousness" of Alan Ayckbourn's humour has pushed my interpretation away from the fundamental funniness of his plays. Of course, all his works are good fun in the old farcical tradition, though there has been a considerable change in his treatment of humour from his first plays to *Absent Friends* or *Absurd Person Singular*. In his introduction to *Relatively Speaking* he explains how he came about to write it. Someone has asked him "for a play which would make people laugh when their seaside summer holidays were spoiled by the rain and they came into the theatre to get dry before trudging back to their landladies. This seemed to me as worthwhile a reason for writing the play as any, so I tried to comply." In fact *Relatively Speaking* is very close to the world of undiluted farce, based as it is on a prolonged equivocation which induces Greg to visit his fiancée's former mature lover in the false belief that he is her father. The play exploits all the possible embarrassments that can be caused by such a mistake in the tradition of a comedy of errors which goes back to antiquity.

EVEN THE MORE RECENT PLAYS abound with the basic element of theatrical humour, that is incongruity, the association of unassociable elements. Norman: "This lettuce is superb. Whoever cooked it. . . ." (*Table Manners*, II, 1). Long ago Paul had stolen his fiancée's napkin for sentimental reasons; now Evelyn addresses her husband John: "You nicked my uncle's screwdriver!" (*Absent Friends*, Act II). Wife: "My husband has always been old. When he was young he was old" (*Countdown*). The last quotation already points to the cruel world of Ayckbourn's latest farces. In his drawing and dining rooms life is mean and horrible. People are hoping not for a dirty, but a filthy weekend (*Round And Round*, I, 1). They bicker over their soup to see who received too much of it (*Table Manners*, II, 1). Cuckold husbands accept their wives' infidelity in order not to jeopardise their promotion (*Confusions*, sketch 3) or their petty business transactions (*Absent Friends*). Women are described in the same impersonal fashion as properties for sale (*Round And Round*, I, 1). "We are the most miserable family you are ever likely to meet" whines John to Colin in *Absent Friends*, but the record is far from secure because of other contenders in Ayckbourn's world. As for the kitchens of his plays, they are infested by little women with a mania for cleanliness who get their satisfaction out of scrubbing a dirty oven (the first act of *Absurd Person Singular* is in fact a frightening description of the horrors of tidiness). But there's worse to come in the bedrooms, which are a complete disaster. Jan complains about Nick's impotence (*Bedroom Farce*, Act I) and Malcolm gets a stunning answer to an intimate question: "You don't get bored with me?" Kate: "No. No. Not often. . . . Only once or twice." The only remedy seems to be for Malcolm to come to bed in a funny hat (*Bedroom Farce*, Act II). Evelyn, who just "did it" in the back of a car with Diana's husband, comments on his performance: "Horrible. Worse than my husband and that's saying a lot" (*Absent Friends*, Act I). Making love is something to get off our chests, out of our system, like a laxative (*Round And Round*, I, 1). Only Trevor in *Bedroom Farce* and Norman in the trilogy seem to emerge not totally destroyed by the erotic catastrophe. But there is something worse than the pusillanimity of the characters' social life, the fastidiousness of their domestic arrangements, the inadequacy of their sexual experience: and this is the outpouring of pious sentiments from the heart of a well-intentioned yet basically stupid man. Ayckbourn has invented some of the best idiots in the history of modern theatre (Tom, the rambling vet in *The Norman Conquests*; Trevor, the public menace in *Bedroom Farce*), but his greatest

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creation seems to me Colin in *Absent Friends*: a character who is so well-meaning in his sickly unctuous sentimentality that he carries laughter to the borderline of disgust (two characters in the play get a fit of hysteria just by listening to his cant). And this is obviously far beyond the traditional boundaries of farce.

In fact it would be enough to modify the angle of vision—or perhaps to alter the style of production and acting—in order to obtain plays which would emerge as dolorous examples of human failure, though enlivened by a rich array of humorous remarks. Almost every character in Ayckbourn's plays is a victim of circumstances, or of his own ineptitude, and he or she always deserves a moment of self-revelation with gentle unobtrusive pathos. Here is Norman talking to bitchy Sarah: "Are you happy then?" Sarah: "Yes—mostly. Occasionally. Now and then. I don't know. I don't have time to think about it" (*Living Together*, I, 1). Her kind down-trodden husband, Reg: "But when I sit here in this house and listen to the quiet. You know, I wonder why I left. I had my own room here, you know. All my books, my own desk, a shelf for my hobbies. . . . I'd make these balsa wood aeroplanes. Dozens of them. Very satisfying. Mind you, they never flew. Soon as I launched them—crack. . . . But it didn't really matter. It was a hell of a bore winding them up" (*Table Manners*, I, 1). Reg's sister, Annie: "[We talk] about super exciting things like does the kitchen ceiling need another coat, and distemper . . . and foot and mouth. Then I pot Mother and retire to bed—alone—itching" (*Table Manners*, I, 1). Marion complaining about her past beauty: "How could anything be so cruel? How could anything be so unutterably cruel?" (*Absurd Person Singular*, Act III). And the examples could be multiplied.

ALL THIS IS QUITE at variance with the remarks by a well-known critic who once described Ayckbourn in a *Dictionary of Contemporary Dramatists* as a pure farceur: "His sole aim is to make us laugh. His plays contain no message, offer no profound vision of the universe, tell us nothing about how to live our lives." Leaving aside the profound vision, my opinion happens to be exactly the opposite. In *Mother Figure*, the first sketch of *Confusions*, a woman has lived for so long alone with her children that she even talks to her neighbours as if they were infants. Her conversation is full of choccy bics, smack the botty, toothypegs, lovely choccy and Mr Poddle. In the adult context I found each word from this baby language terrifying. For reasons which I could not quite fathom the audience was rolling with laughter.

Selective Silence

New Poetry—By JAMES FENTON

"SEBASTIAN BARKER is the son of George Barker", says the blurb of *On the Rocks*,[1] "his mother is Elizabeth Smart, author of *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*. It is with this formidable parentage that he has had to wrestle to extract his own poetry." A slightly apologetic note here, don't you think? And perhaps not out of place, when one sees what emerges from the struggle. Mr Barker offers us a modern *Modern Love*. It is really quite gripping. The story is believable, the mood clear. One can see exactly what the first person of the sonnets is on about:

Fuck[2] *the gossip. F— the backstabbing. F— the*
Contumelious, pusillanimous, parasitic, spitting,
confidante.
F— the broken windows, the dripping gutters. F— the
Bills, the future, the holes in my socks, the elephant
Crashing around in my memory. F— the odour
Of forgiveness, the nice little boy philosophy.
And f— that nice little boy you picked up in the bar
Down by the river. F— him. F— him. And
f— the private eye
On our public adoration. F— the lot of them.
And f— those friends, the ones who helped to
screw us
With soft chat to the very joists of heaven.
F— alcohol. F— cigarettes. And f— the smell
of hashish.
F— everything in fact. In fact, f—
Me, you cunt. Yes me. If you're in luck.

What Mr Barker lacks, if I may venture a little mild criticism, is the subtlety of the man at the country house party, who woke to a stinking hangover and the terrible recollection that he had bet a fellow guest that he would say "arseholes" three times to his hostess at breakfast. The opportunity arose as he was helping himself from the hotplate. "Ah, soles!" he exclaimed. "They

[1] *On the Rocks*. By SEBASTIAN BARKER. Martin Brian & O'Keeffe, £2.00.

[2] Hereafter in this poem we print the word (repeated 16 times) with a dash, in order to relieve the monotony.—ED. NOTE.

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are soles, aren't they? Are soles in season?" True poetry requires a similar resourcefulness—a creative indirectness of approach. This quality appears to have eluded Mr Barker, and when he writes, in sonnet XXVI, "Who in hell cares I scribble out my heart in verse?/ Not the lousiest motherfucker who stomps his meat in the kitchen", one is horribly tempted to agree.

Who in hell cares about so much contemporary poetry? The authors, certainly, and there seems to be no shortage of publishers. What one wonders is: who are the readers? Who, for instance, will be rushing out to buy the latest enormous Arts Council anthology, *New Poetry 3*, edited by Alan Brownjohn and Maureen Duffy?[3] Austerely but unattractively produced, the whole book exudes worthiness from every pore. These poems are not usually very bad, but nor are there any surprises. It is precisely the sort of anthology one would expect from an arts council: safe.

And it reminds one how very institutionalised the writing of poetry has become. Each age of course has had its prevalent forms, but I should say that it is about time that we gave our ones a little rest. By prevalent forms, I mean the sort of short lyric, well made and ready for the slim volume, in which this anthology abounds. One gets the feeling one has read them all before—and one has. There is the I-once-had-a-very-interesting-relative-who-is-now-dead poem, the I-have-just-had-a-significant-experience-in-the-kitchen poem, the I-and-thou poem. This is how the last kind works:

In the first line I say something about you.
By the second line it is time to turn to me.
And now it would be appropriate to give some
background detail—
Such as a few remarks about the weather.

Pausing to take a new stanza for emphasis
I introduce a couple of general thoughts about us
Before winding the whole thing up with
A significant image.

This kind of poem was pioneered by *the Review*, and it is time for a moratorium. In a way the form is deliberately hermetic—we have very little opportunity of penetrating either the I or the Thou, and are asked to take too much on trust. Believe me, the poem says, this is something important. Then, before we have had time to make up our minds, the thing is over.

The slim volume has often been attacked in the past, but not, I think, for the best reason, which is that it lures the poet into a habit of production (one slim vol. every four years or so counts as good progress), an evenness of tone and uniformity of approach. Reliability is too much prized—you can count on old Bloggs to go on churning it out. But of course this notion—that regular movement of the poetic bowels is healthy—is extremely recent, and not beyond question. Think of the poets of the 18th century. The reputation of many rests on a mere handful of works; but we do not find this odd or regrettable, and nor did their contemporaries. Why should we then create such a fuss about the "poetic silence" of this or that poet of today? A man may be capable of writing no more than two good poems. Let him then keep quiet. *Aut tace aut loquere meliora silentio.*

HAPPY IS THE POET who has something else to do, something else which relieves him of this futile pressure to produce. Happy, for instance, Kingsley Amis, who after writing no poems for a couple of years suddenly comes up with the 200-liner, "A Reunion", printed in the P.E.N. anthology, *New Poems 1977–78*.[4] It takes a great deal of invisible skill with a fairly strict form to reproduce a conversational tone so specific—the invisible skill we admire in Amis's stable-mate Larkin. At the conclusion of this description of a reunion of old soldiers, Amis speaks of the "small kinds and degrees of love" that remain the basis of such gatherings:

So, when one of us had his leave stopped,
Was awarded a dose of the clap
Or an extra guard, or was dropped
Up to his ears in the crap,
Or felt bloody browned off,
He never got left on his own;
The others had muscle enough
To see that he soldiered on.

Disbandment has come to us
As it comes to all who grow old;
Demobilised now, we face
What we face when we first enrolled.
Stand still in the middle rank!
See you show them a touch of pride—
Left-right, left-right, bags of swank—
On the one-man pass-out parade.

Happy, then, the sad Mr Amis. Happy too the editor of the P.E.N. anthology, Gavin Ewart. Here is a man who achieved a precocious fame in the '30s, and then went "silent." For the last decade or so he has been immensely productive in a way which very much goes against the contemporary grain. Here he is with his anthology, a pamphlet (*The First Eleven*)[5], and a collection (*Or Where a Young Penguin Lies*

[3] *New Poetry 3*. Edited by ALAN BROWNJOHN and MAUREEN DUFFY. Arts Council of Great Britain (distributed by Carcanet Press), £4.00, paper £2.25.
[4] *New Poems 1977–78*. Edited by GAVIN EWART. Hutchinson, £4.95.
[5] *The First Eleven*. By GAVIN EWART. Poet and Printer (30 Grimsdyke Road, Hatch End, Middlesex), 60p.

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Screaming[6]). The anthology is good—far more varied and unusual than the Arts Council effort. The pamphlet is really nicely produced. The collection is excellent.

A particularly attractive quality of Mr Ewart is his inventiveness, his genuine experimentalism. Much of the time he is out to amuse—with crackpot inventions like the "Semantic Limerick According to Doctor Johnson's Dictionary (Edition of 1765)":

> *There exifted a perſon, not a woman or a boy, being in the firſt part of life, not old, of St. John's, who wiſhed to — the large water-fowl, that have a long and very ſtraight neck, and are very white, excepting when they are young (their legs and feet being black, as are their bills, which are like that of a goofe, but ſomething rounder, and a little hooked at the lower ends, the two ſides below their eyes being black and ſhining like ebony).*

Etcetera. At other times he can write at the opposite extreme, as in "The Gentle Sex", a cold and convincing exploration of the brutality of Ulster life. There are faults—in almost every poem there are faults, such as rich rhymes or whole lines which seem to have been put in for the sake of the form—but I have to say that I like Mr Ewart's faults as much as his virtues. There is no sense that the stuff is being churned out. Rather, there is a hyperactive talent that *must write*. An enviable gift.

Kit Wright's first collection, *The Bear Looked Over the Mountain*,[7] well produced by the Salamander imprint, has a certain similarity to Mr Ewart's. Mr Wright has a good line in musical rhythm and unusual form. He is very much the entertainer—one can see that these poems would go down well at readings, some of them perhaps better at readings than on the cold page, where their oddness is after a while unsatisfactory. There are lyrics, too, of a more conventional kind:

> *What were you going to say*
> *On the path above the sea*
> *When we stared down at the bay*
> *And suddenly*
> *The film of the bright day*
> *Snapped at the end of a reel,*
> *Wind turned on its heel*
> *And water ran away?*

A poem in a single sentence, something of an I-Thou poem, relying entirely on the happy image of the film at the end of the reel. It is further evidence of the continuing influence of Hardy, the modern English poet's favourite poet (in the P.E.N. anthology Douglas Dunn has a piece of pure Hardy).

---

[6] *Or Where A Young Penguin Lies Screaming*. By GAVIN EWART. Gollancz, £3.20.

[7] *The Bear Looked Over the Mountain*. By KIT WRIGHT. Salamander Press, £3.95, paper £2.25.

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AS FOR THE MODERN IRISH POET, the reason that there are so many of them, and that they are all rather good, is that they are all dying to be better than Seamus Heaney. Ireland is a rather small place. Mr Heaney is a rather large man, but not so large that the others feel there is nothing left for them to do. On the contrary, they are all yearning to push him off his perch. Ireland is absolutely crammed full with poetic subjects—it has a real countryside still, it has a real war, it has its history and its poetic tradition. So—why not get stuck in?

And here comes Frank Ormsby with a Poetry Book Society choice, *A Store of Candles*.[8] Country life:

> *Suddenly, above the hedge, a head*
> *Moving at speed. It dips*
> *And rises, further up the lane becomes*
> *A flying bust, and at the next gap*
> *Takes final form:*
> *The District Nurse on a bicycle.*

The gradual revelation here is rather like the gradual revelation of Mr Ormsby's gifts throughout this book—through glimpses, ironic and beautiful. Mr Ormsby's house:

> *Look in the dark alcove under the stairs:*
> *A paintbrush steeped in turpentine, its hairs*
>
> *softening for use; rat-poison in a jar;*
> *bent spoons for prising lids; a spare fire-bar;*
>
> *the shaft of a broom; a tyre; assorted nails;*
> *a store of candles for when the light fails.*

Then there is Mr Ormsby's childhood, his discovery of sex through reading Havelock Ellis, his mother's collection of ornaments in her council house, his own difficult relationship with his mother:

> *Discarded woman, shame is turning me*
> *To wish you mornings, and a folding night*
> *Whose dreams are gentle, sight enough to see*
> *This late guest bowed with winter offerings*
> *Who turns his face into your going light.*

We are introduced to Mr Ormsby's bachelor uncle, in a perfect little I-once-had-an-interesting-relative poem, "An Uncle Remembered." The uncle comes to the Ormsby wedding, gets drunk, is agreeable, and leaves by train, asking that the first boy be named after him. The uncle is not exactly killed off for our benefit, but the manner of his departure, and the title of the poem, does suggest that this is the last we will see of him. Later we move house with Mr Ormsby, and observe his lack of privacy the first time he makes love in the new establishment. By the end of the book, we are familiar with most of the Ormsby

[8] *A Store of Candles*. By FRANK ORMSBY. Oxford University Press, £1.95.

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family, excepting, oddly, young Mrs Ormsby; we close it with a pleasant sense of having read the perfect slim volume. Watch out, Mr Heaney.

ANNE STEVENSON KICKS OFF in *Enough of Green*[9] with "To be a Poet." It seems to me, as it seemed to Eliot, that there is something inherently wrong with the ambition to be a poet, as opposed to the ambition to write poems. Certainly there is something wrong with this advice:

> *You must always be alone.*
> *But don't beg a soupscrap of charity*
> *or birdcrumb of tolerance.*
> *Shift for yourself.*
> *As furniture heaves off your life*
> *And you'll love your deliverance.*

There follows a stanza advising against giving in to loneliness, restlessness, memory and remorse. Then:

> *Refuse them. Stay faithful to Silence, just*
> *Silence, sliding between that breath*
> *and now this breath, severing the tick*
> *from the tock on the alarm clock,*
> *measuring the absence of else.*
> *And the presence, the privilege.*

This is muddled bosh. Whenever people talk of silence in art one knows they are about to take leave of their better judgment. And what is the absence of else? what the presence? what the privilege? What indeed? Anne Stevenson's poems are generally much clearer than this, but they are often too slack—little more than notes for a poem:

> *Ebb day, full tide.*
> *Yellowhammers whistling in fullblown bushes.*
> *Scent of wet cypresses, lavender, roses.*
> *Dying storm, veiled like a bride.*

And sometimes, as in

> *Reach Mallaig and discover*
> *Heaven is real*

she sounds as if she is writing for the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Still, better this than Adrian Henri's *City Hedges*[10] with its poem in memory of Ulrike Meinhof, a work for which the flabby Henri should be awarded the Order of the Red Hot Knitting Needle Shoved up the Nostril:

> *Urban Guerilla*
> *you burst into me*

[9] *Enough of Green*. By ANNE STEVENSON. Oxford University Press, £2.25.

[10] *City Hedges*. By ADRIAN HENRI. Jonathan Cape, £1.25.

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machinegunned
the old poems
stationed at the door
for just a contingency
made off
with my heart
in a getaway car

blah blah blah. Ending:

as the masked militiamen
burst
into the room
wonder
if I'll miss you.

The convenient metaphor of the old poems, rather than people, at the door is symptomatic of Mr Henri's denatured, facile, dishonest political outlook. Avoid this volume like the plague.

Laurel—or Brussels Sprouts?

On E. B. White—By D. J. Enright

THERE ARE TIMES when one finds oneself engaged in championing an author, and maybe finding it hard to do effectively, even while one is aware of the comical gratuitousness of the exercise. This, alas, looks like being one of those times.

Dorothy Lobrano Guth remarks in her introduction to E. B. White's collected letters[1]—which constitute a virtual autobiography—that, like White's essays, stories, novels and poems, they are "good company." This is the handshake of death at a time when the aim of writing is commonly reckoned to be the giving of (increasingly tedious) offence. "Good company"! Who on earth wants to keep that? Moreover, White is most widely known for his essays. *Essays!* As White says in the foreword to a new self-selected volume of essays,[2] compared with the novelist, the poet and the playwright, the essayist is a second-class citizen. You do not win the Nobel Prize by writing essays, least of all essays which are not always free from humour. "The world likes humour, but it treats it patronizingly. It decorates its serious artists with laurel, and its wags with Brussels sprouts." Nor does it help (even though you are only 29 at the time) if you make such admissions as "I discovered a long time ago that writing of the small things of the day, the trivial matters of the heart, the inconsequential but near things of this living, was the only kind of creative work which I could accomplish with any sincerity or grace."

True, practically anything can set White off. More accurately, he has the sort of mind which snaps up precisely the trifles that can set it off. Writing to Thurber in 1938, he mentions a scrap of conversation he overheard between two men on the street. "So she had the whole fucking bedroom suite sawed up and put together again." From that he passes to an advertisement for a record of the sound of a piano being smashed by a man with an axe—"the sort of thing that you ought to have in your home, for rainy days when the mood is on you." How much water had to flow over the American dam—the Pilgrims . . . Valley Forge . . . Emerson and transcendentalism . . . Shiloh . . . Verdun—before the disc came along that we have all been waiting for! "The Instrument of the Immortals, getting it in the teeth from a Keen Kutter. . . ."

Some writers seem to hate language the way an axe hates a piano. Not so White, who went on to revise William Strunk Jr's *The Elements of Style* (also no Nobel Prize winner).[3] Words fascinate him endlessly. (As did almost, it must be admitted, chickens.) In a *New Yorker* inter-office memo, he complains about the transmutation of "fresh" into "afresh":

> An afresh starter is likely to be a person who wants to get agoing. He doesn't just want to get going, he wants to get *a*going. An afresh starter is also likely to be a person who feels acold when he steps out of the tub. Some of my best friends lie abed and run amuck, but they do *not* start afresh. Never do.

However, if he is obliged to adjust to the new situation, then the characters in his stories will

---

[1] *Letters of E. B. White.* Collected and edited by Dorothy Lobrano Guth. Harper & Row, $15.00.

[2] *Essays of E. B. White.* Harper & Row, $12.50.

[3] In a note in the new *Essays* to the 1957 piece on Strunk which inspired Macmillan Company to commission his revision, White writes: "Strunk was a fundamentalist; he believed in right and wrong, and so, in the main, do I. Unless someone is willing to entertain notions of superiority, the English language disintegrates, just as a home disintegrates unless someone in the family sets standards of good taste, good conduct, and simple justice." Not that White is pedantic. Elsewhere he has told of the newspaper editor who changed a man's reported cry on recognising his wife's body in the morgue—"My God, it's her!"—to "My God, it's she!"

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no longer be typical people: "they will all be atypical. Some of them, perhaps all of them, will be asexual, even amoral."

White (who has preserved a seemingly easy balance between the Thurber in him and the Thoreau) had trouble with his chickens. There was something wrong with them, they never stopped shaking their heads. Was it worms, fleas, eczema? "Sometimes I stand there and get thinking that maybe they are shaking their heads over *me*. 'Poor old White,' they say, shaking their heads." It was all part of "the turbulence of country life." And things were not so different with words. In a new chapter to *The Elements of Style*, White advised students to be guided by their ear when deciding whether or not to use the conjunction "that" in a sentence. Take for instance, "He felt that the girl had not played fair." White pointed out that, if you omitted the "that", you had "He felt the girl. . . ." His editor at Macmillan Company considered this particular example likely to create a disturbance in the classroom, and White made a substitution, though not without a feeling protest. "That girl . . . illustrates the embarrassments of prose, and she will be missed if you dismiss her." He signed the letter, "Yrs for the iron word and the felt girl. . . ." Three years later he is telling the same editor that in his next grammar book he wants to show how to end a sentence with five prepositions. A father goes upstairs to read to his young son but he brings the wrong book, and the boy asks: "What did you bring that book that I don't want to be read to out of up for?"

GOOD HUMOUR, a quick intelligence, grace, succinctness, lucidity, sureness of aim, excellent manners, yet (the iron fist in the felt glove) an unyielding trueness to himself. . . . This account may only suggest that E. B. White is a really nice 19th-century gentleman (well, he was born in 1899) who thanked people when they did things for him and thanked them in style. Which is true, but hardly sufficient. One is forced back on quotation, since nothing conveys a sense of White's way of writing half so well as his writing. Answering a correspondent's query about making use of copyright material, he says in his nice, casual and forcible manner: "I think the law allows you to swipe a little of it, but not much—like taking a single grape as you pass the fruit bowl on the sideboard." And asked to supply a puff for a book-jacket, he achieves an effective yet charming brush-off, neither sour nor sweet but characteristically sweet-and-sour: "It wouldn't do any good to send me galleys of a

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book, because I don't comment on books—except to my wife under cover of darkness."

His children's books brought him many letters from children, and here the brush-off had to be very gently administered, or else their parents or teachers would accuse him of being cruel, and it was of little avail to argue that if he answered all the letters, he would never have time to write anything else. "I am five feet eight inches tall", he wrote to one such young reader; and to a letter which began, "I am a confused senior at Newton High School", he replied: "I am a confused writer at 25 West 43 Street, and one of the reasons for my confusion is that students want me to explain myself." When a child asked if his wife helped him in his writing, he answered in his usual adult manner (there was to be no mere whimsicality, not even where kids were concerned) that his wife was indeed helpful (and plainly she was), though "she is an editor. An editor is a person who knows more about writing than writers do but who has escaped the terrible desire to write." Softening a little, he went on to admit that "Some of my writings have won prizes but awards of that sort are not very much fun or satisfaction and I would rather have a nice drink of ginger ale, usually. Writing does have its rewards but they do not come in packages." The tone is much the same when he writes to a children's editor at Harper's:

> Actually, books are not safe to read—yesterday I lay down for a half hour after lunch, with a book, and while lying there quietly was stung under the right eye by a tremendous wasp that came along and wanted to put me out of my pain, and almost did.

The greater part of his correspondence over the children's book, *Charlotte's Web*, has to do with getting the illustrations right: Charlotte was a true spider, not a woman's face with eight legs attached. (For the delicate precision of White's dealings with animals, see the account of a coon coming down a tree in "Coon Tree", in *Essays*.) Later in life White remarks perceptively that he had discovered, quite by accident, that "reality and fantasy make good bedfellows" and "there was no need to tamper in any way with the habits and characteristics of spiders, pigs, geese, and rats. No 'motivation' is needed if you remain true to life and true to the spirit of fantasy."

Charlotte's Web was not "a moral tale", he insisted, but "an *appreciative* story", and the distinction, while sometimes hard to determine, is a crucial one. The huge success of the book proved that children can take a great deal in their stride—considerably more than librarians could, it seemed. Wilbur the pig shows something of his creator's concern for verbal behaviour: he objects to the lamb's remark that "Pigs mean less than nothing to me" on the grounds that "Nothing is absolutely the limit of nothingness." Charlotte sets out to save Wilbur from the slaughterhouse by proclaiming his virtues in words woven into her web, a sort of advertising that White could endorse: "SOME PIG", "TERRIFIC", "RADIANT", "HUMBLE".... She tells Wilbur, "A spider's life can't help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies. By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle. Heaven knows anyone's life can stand a little of that." And at the end the author sums up: "Wilbur never forgot Charlotte. ... It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both." We can see why he approved of the saying of P. L. Travers, that anyone who writes well for children is probably writing for one child—the child that is himself. In White's case, one who abhorred cheap whimsy and cuteness.

Or the slightest hint of sentimentality. To a Father MacGillivray, who inquired whether some of his writings haunted him, he wrote back with courteous astringency: "Sure they do. At my age I am haunted by the feeling that everything I write I've written before, only better." Pretentiousness is another bugbear. In 1958 White declined to be interviewed for the Writers at Work series: "For one thing, they would have to call it 'Writers NOT at Work'." And he adduced the Hemingway interview, "the one that explained that he always wrote standing on the skin of a Lesser Kudu. (I always write sitting on my arse, except when I have piles.)" White's parody, "Across the Street and Into the Grill", has long struck me as considerably more memorable than anything actually written by Hemingway:

> This is my last and best and true and only meal, thought Mr Perley as he descended at noon and swung east on the beat-up sidewalk of Forty-fifth Street. Just ahead of him was the girl from the reception desk. I am a little fleshed up around the crook of the elbow, thought Perley, but I commute good....

"Please keep telling me about your business experiences, but not the rough parts", the girl says to Perley in the restaurant, as they lie under the table, wrapped in an Indian blanket, and "she touched his hand where the knuckles were scarred and stained by so many old mimeographings." But it was Hemingway who got the Nobel Prize.

IN MATTERS OF PUBLIC MOMENT White was not so much HUMBLE as adroitly self-protective, a natural non-joiner. When in early 1942 he was co-opted into the production of a pamphlet on the Four Freedoms and entrusted

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with the writing of the section on freedom of speech, he was most unhappy. "I couldn't understand anything, and wished I was home", he wrote to his wife. Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress and in charge of the project, soon took the job away from him, "almost imperceptibly", and demoted him to rewrite man for all four freedoms: "This is a very sobering assignment and only once in a while do I think it is funny."

But White had his troubles, for he was no evader of responsibilities that made sense to him. In 1947 he protested as "a member of a party of one" against the loyalty check and the blacklisting of those who refused to answer questions before the House Un-American Activities Committee. "If I must declare today that I am not a Communist, tomorrow I shall have to testify that I am not a Unitarian. And the day after, that I never belonged to a dahlia club." The protest appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune*, who in the same issue described members of the party of one (albeit "valuable elements" in their way) as "probably the most dangerous single elements in our confused and complicated society." In his reply to this magisterial rebuke, White said, "A man who disagreed with a *Tribune* editorial used to be called plucky—now he's called dangerous. By your own definition I already belong among the unemployables."

His excursion into the realm of civil liberties covered him "with a surprising lot of goat feathers." He found himself being courted by the Communist front organisations, and in receipt of so much Red literature at his office at *The New Yorker* that, as he put it, he had to fumigate himself every night before going home. "It was worse than athlete's foot."

A month later he was in hot water again, when the *Ellsworth* (Maine) *American* accused him of being unfair and malicious towards his own veterinarian and veterinary medicine in general in his now celebrated piece, "Death of a Pig", an expert blend of comedy and pathos, reprinted in *Essays*. White wrote soothingly to his vet—"After you left I took another drink and consulted only with God. Even He didn't seem able to loosen up that pig"—and remarked to his brother, concerning these recent scrapes, that "You can't even come out against constipation in America any more." We are tickled but not surprised to find a brief letter of 1956 replying to an invitation to join the Committee of the Arts and Sciences for Eisenhower: "I must decline, for secret reasons."

In 1963 a professor of English at Cornell University published an essay in which he demonstrated that White's collection of columns,

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One Man's Meat, although indisputably a work of literary merit, possessed none of the characteristics of such merit as defined in a test designed to measure students' appreciation of that important attribute. (White's only comment was that he was delighted.) There's the nub of the rub. White lends himself to self-aggrandising expatiation as little as does Edward Thomas. He requires no mediator, for he comes complete with sustaining information, his symbols are so curiously close to what they symbolise. He is a natural writer—and to be "serious", it would appear, art needs a strong dose or injection of unnature. "Natural" does not imply "facile" or "unthinking": White thinks, or whatever it is he is doing, without groaning and sweating and thrashing around—the way a decent traveller takes his trousers off ("I got my training in the upper berths of Pullman cars long ago").

HIS "STANCE" towards life, his personality as a writer, and the subjects, by no means narrow in compass, to which he is drawn—what these chiefly require of him in the formal or technical sphere is that great negative quality: not getting in the way.[4] Nothing is more indecorous, in the eyes of literary critics, than the form which, though clearly there if only because it clearly isn't absent, cannot be fingered and classified—except possibly those attitudes of mind and heart which colour a man's writing uniquely and yet are unamenable to abstraction and schematic display. White's work leaves the self-seeking subtleties of theoretical criticism hungry, and therefore scornful, but it ought to respond well to that humbler activity, "practical criticism." For example:

> The Model T Ford is described as "hard-working, commonplace, heroic." Why these adjectives rather than others?
>
> Paraphrase this sentence in defence of the railroad: "It is the link with my past, for one thing, and with the city, for another—two connections I would not like to see broken."
>
> Write an essay on this theme: "The Canada jay looks as though he had slept in his clothes."
>
> "It flows through Orland every day." Why does the writer describe this line as a "fine lyrical tribute" to the River Narramissic?
>
> "Reading is the work of the alert mind, is demanding, and under ideal conditions produces finally a sort of ecstasy. As in the sexual experience, there

[4] In his essay, "Don Marquis", White notes that the cockroach Archy "was contemptuous of those persons who were absorbed in the mere technical details of his writing. 'The question is whether the stuff is literature or not.' That question dogged his boss, it dogs us all."

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are never more than two persons present in the act of reading—the writer, who is the impregnator, and the reader, who is the respondent. This gives the experience of reading a sublimity and power unequalled by any other form of communication." Discuss these revolutionary views.

We seem to be back with that remark about "good company"—and with the National Book Committee's citation on awarding White their Medal for Literature in 1971: "We are grateful to E. B. White for . . . the infinite pleasure he has given readers, young and old, over the years." Pleasure, too, tends to be immeasurable, especially when infinite.

"Words are for Us, not Us for Words"

By Jan Morris

"WHEN I USE A WORD", said Humpty-Dumpty scornfully to Alice, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less . . . . The question is, which is to be master, that's all."

Bravo! The Great Egg was right, and I count myself if not among his disciples, for I cannot agree with *all* his interpretations of Jabberwocky, at least among his grateful admirers. Words are for us, not us for words. States may distort the meanings of words, ideologies may shift their values, but so far at least it is up to us to use the English language how we please. We are the masters!

It goes without saying that if you admire Humpty Dumpty you are unlikely to be a devotee of Henry Fowler, the idolised, indeed virtually sanctified author of that perennial manual of purism, *Modern English Usage*. Though I believe Mr Fowler was a lovely man, I have detested this book since childhood, and have prided myself always upon taking not the slightest notice of its presumptuous rules and strictures. I loathe its schoolmasterly humour. I resent its assumption that Mr Fowler knows any better than Humpty or me. The English language, like the psyche, seems to me to suffer from too much analysis, and Fowler's prodding and parsing, like the clap-trap fatuities of Freud, have simply made several generations of English-speakers less confident, less original and less happy in their work.

There is a place, I concede, for such a handbook, but it is certainly not in the professional writer's study. Like italic handwriting, it is for those who lack a style of their own. Feeble practitioners of English may need some such self-appointed authority to bolster their own assurance. Timid exponents may feel the need to be sheltered against solecisms or grammatical errors, in case bosses fire, correspondents mock, editors reprove or critics maul them. There is a kind of person, I know, who actually enjoys any kind of dictatorship, even a dictatorship of taste.

But to all such I would say—rise up! You have nothing to lose but your inhibitions! Use the words you like, as you like! Invent your adverbs, mix your metaphors, indulge yourselves in whatever trend, bastard derivation or mid-Atlantic hybrid you wish! *The question is, which is to be master, that's all!*

HOLDING SUCH VIEWS, I came dubiously to the inspection of two neo-Fowlerian books recently published, one by Philip Howard,[1] the well-known essayist of the London *Times*, the other by Kenneth Hudson,[2] defined in his blurb as "a museum consultant for UNESCO." As you might expect, both authors infuriated me almost as much as they themselves are infuriated by the English usages they castigate: but since there are few exercises more enjoyable than being splenetic about words, I got a good deal of pleasure from reading them, and shall get still more from pulling them apart. They brought out the Devil's Advocate in me.

Take Mr Howard's first. It is always easy, of course, to hoist pedants and busybodies of all sorts with their own petards, and Mr Howard would not be invulnerable to such counter-attack. Is not "unreadable and unread", for example, on his page 70, the sort of false tautology the Blessed Fowler loved to sneer at? (If it is unreadable it cannot be read.) But I will not debase myself with quibble. This is not an exchange of letters in an academic journal.

Besides, to my mind "unreadable and unread" makes excellent sense, reinforcing a point and sounding good. Anyway there is no denying that Mr Howard himself is a witty and effective writer. His vocabulary is splendid, his rhythms

[1] *New Words for Old.* By PHILIP HOWARD. Hamish Hamilton, £3.95.

[2] *The Dictionary of Diseased English.* By KENNETH HUDSON. Macmillan, £7.95.

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are infectious, and his mastery of the allusion, the back-reference and the sly interjection is delightful to experience. I have no quarrel with his manner. It is his matter, in this particular book of his, to which I take exception.

Listen to this.

> "*Necessarily* is a very strong word that is being weakened by careless vogue use. It implies the irresistible action of causality or logic . . . . Careless writers and talkers are increasingly tending to use this strong, specialised adverb in contexts that have no tinge of necessity. For example . . . 'The Pope's action . . . is not necessarily wrong'."

This is insolent Fowlerism of the most nauseating kind. "Contexts that have no tinge of necessity"—balderdash! Anybody who is afraid to use "necessarily" in its contemporary idiomiatic sense, as a useful term of caution or reservation—anybody too wet to use it in this way, or so pompous as to disapprove of people who *do* use it, deserves far more than the Glorious Humpty to fall irrevocably off the wall.

Then Mr Howard goes on and on, like all his brother-naggers (for as every reader of *The Times* knows, they are legion), about the now common use of the word "hopefully" in the German-American way—meaning that something is to be hoped. Now there is no modern English usage that I find more distasteful. I dislike the ugly alien sound of it, I think there are plenty of ways round the particular linguistic barrier that it cracks, and I don't propose to use it till the day I die.

But so what? I don't like it: others do. I won't use it: others will. What's so terrible in that? Mr Howard likes to rationalise his prejudices by showing such innovations to be harmful to the precision of the language, but this is pure sophistry. Now as always, the language will be used precisely by those who want it precise—at least since the days of Dr Johnson know-alls have been promising its ruination, and it hasn't happened yet. Nobody is going to make Mr Howard use the new "hopefully" construction, and by God, nobody is going to make me.

But by God again, if I want to I will! To be fair to Mr Howard he leans over backwards (a lively phrase he mocks—"falls flat from overuse") to reassure us that a language should always be receptive to innovations. They must evidently, however, be innovations approved by him, and preferably by the editors of the *Oxford Dictionary*—themselves, to judge by their latest production, now presuming impertinently to pass judgment on matters of verbal taste. In fact there is hardly a phrase or a usage in his entire book, which is divided into 43 anathematical (a word of my own invention) essays, that has not added to the interest, the curiosity or the usefulness of the

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language—and none at all, by the nature of things, which has not augmented its variety.

Of course half of them are, in Mr Howard's own inelegant epithet, "vogue words"—I put it, you see, fastidiously in quotes. Of course half of them degenerate into cliché. Most of them are perhaps not strictly necessary, and many of them are unlovely. Don't use them, then, if you don't want to! If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen! And if you cannot yet accept, for example, as Mr Howard professes himself unable on page 13, that in everyday use "clinical" no longer implies calmness at the bedside, but rather coldness, detachment, scrupulous cleanliness or even inhumanity—if you cannot, for example, adapt to this universally understood contemporary usage, then you have no right lecturing the rest of us about how to write our language.

RIGHT! I WIPE MY HANDS, clinically, and turn to Mr Hudson. Mr Howard's book, though it made me irritable, is (I admit it) beautifully written and great fun to read—or to argue about. Mr Hudson's, in the allegedly straitened circumstances of the publishing industry, might just as well not have been printed. Its purpose apparently is to shame users of "diseased" English into choosing healthier words: but it will make few converts, for reading it is like having a tutorial several hours long with the most niggling, pedantic, disheartening and disheartened of Eng. Lit. dons.

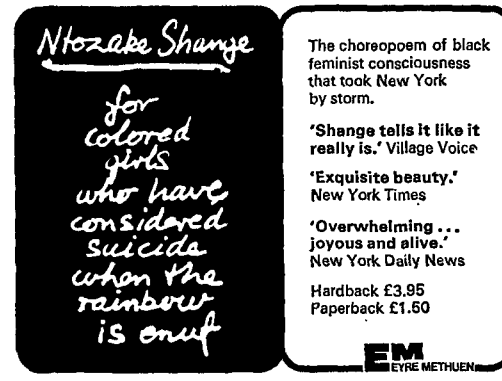
I feel no compunction about savaging it, for Mr Hudson himself has been perfectly beastly to several categories of writer whose phraseology he particularly dislikes. He is, it seems, a crusader against jargon of all kinds, reluctant to recognise that jargon can be good as well as bad, amusing as well as dismal, that it is often no more (or rather, no less) than a useful technical *lingua franca*, or an attempt, however ungainly, to overcome limitations of the English language itself.

The jargons of businessmen, of space travellers, of diplomats. all serve a useful purpose, however reluctant we outside the various fancies are to think profit-wise, commit ourselves to on-going count-downs or make renewed *démarches*. If they find it convenient to talk that way, what business is it of Mr Hudson's? He is on firmer ground, perhaps, when he attacks the deliberate manipulation of language to persuade people to spend money on goods they don't want: but even there, like every pundit that ever was, he haughtily underestimates the understanding of ordinary people, however unlettered, who generally know at least as well as Mr Hudson when they are being gulled.

Every page of this book made my hackles rise. How irresponsible simply to attribute to *The New Yorker*, itself a paragon of purist prose, the frivolities of those who advertise in its pages! How silly to make donnish fun, on page 168, of what was quite obviously a misprint in *The Times*! How perfectly ridiculous to suggest that when a hotel uses the word "guests" for its customers, it is fostering the "pleasant fiction . . . that there will be no question of a bill to pay"!

Most unfairly of all, Mr Hudson is repeatedly contemptuous of people who, faced with the extraordinarily difficult task of expressing in words the quality of a taste, a sound, or a performance, strain at the meanings of English words, or devise new meanings of their own. Mr Hudson is maddeningly obtuse in refusing to accept, or professedly to understand, their attempts. I know perfectly well what a wine writer means when she describes a wine as "wiry", or what a music critic is trying to express by defining a melody as "sinewy." Mr Hudson pretends not to, and sneers at them with the worst sort of Fowlerian mockery.

I have not disliked a book so much for years as I dislike this odious mixture of the hectoring, the condescending, the patronising, the sarcastic and the self-satisfied. *Ugh!*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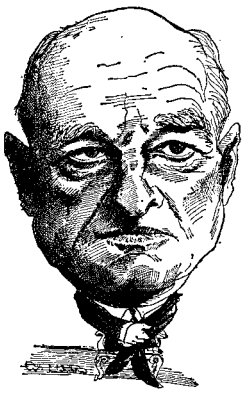
The Two Minds of George Kennan

How To Un-Learn from Experience—By LEOPOLD LABEDZ



"My feelings change; my judgment does not."
MONTAIGNE

"Nothing is more tiresome than to have to explain what everybody should know."
BAUDELAIRE

THE IDEAS AND ARguments of George Kennan on contemporary international problems have been reaching the public for 30 years; he has been developing them for 50 years. Government dispatches and memoranda, articles and interviews, lectures and broadcasts, and many, many books have made Kennan's views widely familiar. His opinions on the current situation formulated in detail in his most recent work, *The Cloud of Danger*,[1] were conveniently summarised in the speech delivered at a November 1977 meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations (published in the March issue of ENCOUNTER).

In the past George Kennan has been attacked from the most diverse quarters. The Soviet and East European press referred to him regularly as "the architect of the Cold War"; our own *Morning Star*, reviewing his *Memoirs* (on 15 March 1973), still called him "a true servant and ideologue of American imperialism"; Professor Anatol Rapoport, an American academic scientist, likened his views to those of Fred Schwartz, the leader of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade. But he was also severely criticised by John Foster Dulles and William Buckley's conservative *National Review*.

At present, no less curiously, his writings have been praised as "wise" by such diverse commentators as James Reston in the *New York Times* and Georgi Ratiani in *Pravda* (21 January 1978). Another *Pravda* commentator, G. Gerasimov, wrote (12 July 1977) that "Kennan's views have substantially evolved in the direction of common sense" and that many pages of his latest book

> "are devoted to convincingly showing the utter groundlessness, lies and malice of constant statements by the Western bourgeois press that the Soviet Union is nurturing plans to attack Western Europe and America and that it is generally striving for 'world hegemony'."

The book "can be recommended for the reference libraries of the State Department and of the White House itself." Coming from *Pravda* it is quite a commendation for the author of the once-notorious "Containment" policy!

GEORGE KENNAN denies inconsistency. When confronted by some of his own contrasting statements (for instance by George Urban in an interview published in ENCOUNTER in September 1976), he either refuses to admit their contradictory character or belittles its significance: "All Russian reality is contradictory, and so perhaps are some of my attitudes to Russia" (the first proposition cannot be taken as logically countenancing the second). Presented with the two opposite recommendations which he made in 1946 and 1952 respectively, Kennan explains it all away by arguing that "each of the two, seemingly irreconcilable, strands of my argument were entirely justified in the context in which it was put forward." Or again:

> "For the purposes of the argument, I am given to overstating a case; and that is one of the reasons why you accuse me of contradiction. If one wants to see both sides of a coin, one has, momentarily at least, to bring out each side in exaggerated relief."

Rereading George Kennan's numerous writings (including his dispatches from pre-War Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union) makes one realise that there is nothing "momentary" about his contradictions, that in spite of his profound

[1] *The Cloud of Danger*. By GEORGE F. KENNAN. Little, Brown, $8.95; Hutchinson, £5.95.

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conviction that he has been basically right throughout the four decades covered by these writings, they betray very clearly the fact that over a period of time his attitudes and counsels have reflected not a balanced judgment, but an almost schizoid political dualism; and it is this which has made him a butt of such diametrically opposite criticism. No amount of logic-chopping can reconcile these flagrant contradictions; the only consistency one can detect—with some difficulty—is not logical, but psychological.

THIS MAY SOUND harsh and it is painful to have to say it so bluntly in view of the sterling qualities of George Kennan's intellect and character. Those who have criticised him (and with whom he has disagreed)—Dean Acheson and Paul Nitze, Raymond Aron and Hugh Seton-Watson, Adam Ulam and Richard Pipes—have all been highly complimentary about his talents, historical knowledge, and sophistication. And these were not just conventional tributes. They were deservedly given and I can only endorse them.[2] This makes an inquest on George Kennan's political writings a melancholy occasion: one is aware of how right and perspicacious he has been on many subjects. Not only Kennan *Mark I*, but occasionally even Kennan *Mark II*. Yet *amicus Plato*. . . .

KENNAN *Mark I* is of course "Mr X", the man who articulated the "Containment" idea. Kennan *Mark II* is the man who evolved from his original position of advising resistance to Soviet expansionism to the present one of advocating its accommodation. This evolution was punctuated by occasional relapses, i.e. when he said after Prague 1968: "I have never understood this talk about *détente*. I have never seen any evidence of *détente* and I wouldn't trust any so-called *détente* if it is not supported by free contacts between governments and peoples." But the overall direction of his evolution is umistakable (which explains why *Pravda* endorses him now). Here is Kennan *Mark I*:

"It is not our lack of knowledge which causes us to be puzzled by Russia. It is that we are incapable of understanding the truth about Russia when we see it." *(September 1944)*

"It is no concern of the Soviet government to disabuse the American public of prejudices highly favourable to Soviet interests. It is entirely agreeable to Moscow that Americans should be indulged in a series of illusions which lead them to put pressure on their government to accomplish the impossible and to go always one step further in pursuit of the illusive favour of the Soviet government. They observe with gratification that in this way a great people can be led, like an ever-hopeful suitor, to perform one act of ingratiation after the other without ever reaching the goal which would satisfy its ardour and allay its generosity. . . . No English or American politician can pass up any half-way adequate opportunity for claiming that he has been successful in gaining Russian confidence and committing the Russians to a more moderate course of action. In other words, they consider that Anglo-Saxon opinion can always be easily appeased in a pinch by a single generous gesture, or even in all probability by a few promising words, and that Western statesmen can always be depended upon to collaborate enthusiastically in this appeasement." *(May 1945)*

"I have no hesitation in saying quite categorically, in the light of some eleven years' experience with Russian matters, that it would be highly dangerous to our security if the Russians were to develop the use of atomic energy. . . . It is thus my profound conviction that to reveal to the Soviet government any knowledge which might be vital to the defense of the United States, without adequate guarantees for the control of its use in the Soviet Union, would constitute a frivolous neglect of vital interests of our people." *(September 1945)*

"The Soviet régime is a police régime par excellence, reared in the dim half-world of Tsarist police intrigue, accustomed to think primarily in terms of police power. This should never be lost sight of in gauging Soviet motives. Soviet power, unlike that of Hitlerite Germany, is neither schematic nor adventuristic. It does not take unnecessary risks. Impervious to logic of reason, it is highly sensitive to logic of force." *(February 1946)*

"I think there can be no more dangerous tendency in American public opinion than one which places on our government an obligation to accomplish the impossible by gestures of good will and conciliation towards a political entity constitutionally incapable of being conciliated." *(March 1946)*

"It is clear that the main element of any US policy towards the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." *(July 1947)*[3]

[2] In his *Memoirs* (Part II, p. 237) George Kennan puzzles about a similar juxtaposition (occasioned by his Reith Lectures, 1957):

"The criticisms, almost without exception, were cast in terms respectful of myself as a person and designed to spare, if possible, my own feelings. . . . Never, surely, has anyone been so widely and generously forgiven as a person for what were, in the eyes of his critics, such grievous errors as a thinker."

Kennan believes that such reaction was due "to the happenings and the atmosphere of the day." In fact, it has been repeated by friendly critics again and again for a quarter-of-a-century. There is nothing paradoxical or strange about admiring Kennan's attainments and considering his political judgment wrong on many occasions.

[3] The above quotations are from Kennan's dispatches from Moscow. Cf. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. V (1945) & Vol. VI (1946), Department of State (Washington, 1967 & 1969). The concluding one is from: "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947).

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EVER SINCE THEN George Kennan has kept explaining that "Mr X" has been misunderstood In his *Memoirs* he maintains that this was largely his own fault. He confesses to responsibility for the "misunderstandings" because of the three "serious deficiencies" of the article: (1) the failure to mention "the difficulties with which the Soviet leaders were faced in their attempt to exercise political dominion over Eastern Europe"; (2) "the failure to make clear that what I was talking about when I mentioned the containment of Soviet power was not the containment by military means of a military threat, but the political containment of a political threat"; (3) the failure "to make clear that the 'containment' of which I was speaking was not something that I thought we could, necessarily, do everywhere successfully, or even needed to do everywhere successfully, in order to serve the purpose that I had in mind."

At least partly as a result of what he calls these "egregious errors", Mr Kennan sadly reflects, "the myth of the 'doctrine of containment' has never fully lost its spell." He has, as he put it in the Urban ENCOUNTER interview, "oversold his bill of goods." Thirty years after the publication of the "Mr X" article, Kennan complained that it has dogged his "footsteps ever since, like a faithful but unwanted and somewhat embarrassing animal", a remark triumphantly quoted in *Pravda* (21 January 1978).

But like the Shakespearean lady (whom he himself invokes), George Kennan doth protest too much. This can be seen not only from the ambiguities and contradictions accompanying his arguments, but also from the shifting premises of such arguments in the course of his political evolution. It can be gauged from the comparison of the tenor of his earlier pronouncements with those being made by Kennan *Mark II.*

IN HIS *Memoirs* Mr Kennan describes his frustration at trying to explain to American officials and politicians the nature of the problem presented by post-War Soviet Russia,

> "For eighteen long months I had done little else but pluck people's sleeves, trying to make them understand the nature of the phenomenon with which we in the Moscow embassy were daily confronted and which our government and people had to learn to understand if they were to have any chance of coping successfully with the problems of the post-war world. So far as official Washington was concerned, it had been to all intents and purposes like talking to a stone. . . . Now, suddenly, my opinion was being asked. . . . Here was a case where nothing but the whole truth would do. Now, by God, they would have it." (Vol. I, p. 293)

The result was a "long telegram" (of 22 February 1946, quoted above) in which Kennan analysed the basic features of the "post-War Soviet outlook" and which, he says, established his reputation. "My voice now carried."

It is more than ironical that Kennan now considers the "long telegram" as hardly justifying such an outcome:

> "I read it over today [1967] with a horrified amusement. Much of it reads exactly like one of those primers put out by alarmed Congressional committees or by the Daughters of the American Revolution, designed to arouse the citizenry to the dangers of the Communist conspiracy." (p. 294)

Actually, it does not. Kennan exaggerates his anti-Bolshevik self-criticism. If he were in fact wrong then he should say so plainly, instead of building an elaborate edifice of rationalisations for his basic change of political position. To attribute it solely to a change in the (objective) situation only indicates that Kennan has not the courage of his (changed) convictions.

When revisionist historians or ideologues of the New Left or *Pravda* dismiss the Soviet danger to the West, an attitude towards which George Kennan has increasingly gravitated during the last 30 years, they themselves have at least some measure of consistency. Kennan has none. He knows from personal experience that the revisionist historians indulge in myth-making. There was no anti-Soviet Western conspiracy which started the Cold War. If anything, the "Good Uncle Joe" era of illusions in the West contributed to that appeasement of Stalin against which Kennan himself warned. He has never had any sympathy for the *enragé* New Revolutionaries of the 1960s, with their fanaticism, violence, shallow millenarianism and historical ignorance.[4] He has always been repelled by "progressive" double standards:

> "Any régime that chooses to call itself Marxist can be sure that its brutalities and oppression will be forgiven, whereas any régime that does not is stamped as being of the Right, in which case the slightest invasion of the rights or liberties on *its* territory at once becomes the object of intense indignation."

Nor was he ever tempted by Marxism. Indeed, he considers that "its irrelevance has been amply demonstrated at every turn." As for *Pravda*, he has never had anything but contempt for Soviet mendacity. In his Reith Lectures he said:

> "From the time of their seizure of power, forty years ago, the Russian Communists have always been characterised by their extraordinary ability to cultivate falsehood as a deliberate weapon of policy. . . . Their habitual carelessness about the truth has tended to obliterate in their minds the

[4] Cf. George Kennan, *Democracy and the Student Left* (1968). Also his "Rebels Without a Program", *The New York Times Magazine*, 21 January 1968.

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> distinction between what they do believe and what they merely find it convenient to say. . . . A wise Western policy will insist that no single falsehood or distortion from the Soviet side should ever go unanswered . . . would make it harder for them to ignore the distinction between the real and the unreal, and would place limitations—thus far not visible—on their use of falsehood as a weapon of political policy."

Today, twenty years later, *Pravda* and *Izvestia* (and Soviet Communists in general) are as mendacious as ever. Whatever other changes might have occurred in the Soviet Union, this particular official habit of mind has endured and, even now, as Kennan wrote in 1946, "Soviet people are fed by Soviet government and Party propaganda a distorted and often vicious picture of the USA. . . ."

THE CONTRAST WITH the attitudes of Kennan *Mark II* cannot be more pronounced, even though he is too sophisticated and intelligent a person not to soften it by introducing qualifications, conditional clauses, and other eristic ploys to rationalise the shift in his attitude towards Western policy.

His fundamental premise is of course the argument that the Soviet Union has changed.

> "[With] some people the trouble seems to be that they are unaware of the changes . . . between 1947 and 1977, [people] who talk of the problems of Soviet-American relations in terms identical with those used at the height of the Cold War—who sometimes seem in fact unaware that Stalin is dead."[5]

His subordinate premise is that during that period the Western world has "not at all been able to make the pretence [of a higher moral departure-point] valid." Kennan *Mark II* concluded therefore that "as things are, I can see very little merit in organising ourselves to defend from the Russians the porno-shops in central Washington."[6] As a dismaying indication of Western decadence it may be a legitimate reflection; as a logical argument about the defence of Western civilisation it is absurd.

Is the question of changes in post-Stalin Russia something which the serious critics of Kennan have in fact truly overlooked? Some of these critics have been following the "thaws", the "liberalisation", and "bourgeoisification" problems as closely as he did himself. Ulam, Pipes, Seton-Watson, Laqueur, Schapiro, Conquest, Grossman, or myself cannot really be charged with ignorance in this respect; so George Kennan is, to use his own expression, creating a dummy only "to treat it as if it were real." The question is not whether there were changes—no sane person, no open-eyed student of society, would deny it. But what is their character and significance, how relevant are they to the problem of Soviet expansionism and *a fortiori* to Western policy? Not *any* change is sufficient to diminish the Soviet danger to Europe and America. There was relaxation under Khrushchev, but it did not prevent Soviet intervention in Hungary after the 20th CPSU "De-Stalinisation" Congress nor did it hinder the placing of missiles in Cuba after the 22nd "De-Stalinisation" Congress. And under Brezhnev Stalin became less dead than before.

IN 1945 KENNAN *Mark I* expressed his deep concern that because of the illusions

> "kept alive among large sections of the American public, the Kremlin will not give up the hope that the Western democracies may, for the time being, be used as the greatest and most powerful auxiliary instrument in the establishment of Russian power in Eastern and Central Europe."

In 1946 he wrote to the Secretary of State:

> "We must see that our public is educated to the realities of the Russian situation. I cannot overemphasise the importance of this."[7]

In 1977, when America has lost its military superiority and the Soviet Union is fighting proxy wars in Africa, Kennan *Mark II* writes that "the creation of the satellite area of Eastern and Central Europe . . . was in reality a revival [*sic*] of traditional Russian power in that region", that "the tendency to border expansion . . . does not play a prominent role in the motivation of Soviet leaders today", that their "motivation is essentially defensive and . . . riveted primarily to the unsolved problems of economic development within their own country."[8] The Soviet government's action in Angola may have demonstrated "its newly acquired ability to project its military presence to distant and peripheral points", but that *Mark I* insight does not bother Kennan *Mark II*:

> "The effort to assist to the seats of power in distant countries factions whose aims seem reasonably compatible with one's own is, as I have already noted, not foreign to the normal practice of great powers, including the United States. Why it should cause such great surprise or alarm when it proceeds from the Soviet Union I fail to understand."[9]

There is, therefore, no need to worry about all those Cubans on African battlefields and the Soviet billion-dollar arms-airlift to embattled Ethiopia. After all, the Russians "have not even

[5] ENCOUNTER, March 1978.
[6] ENCOUNTER, September 1976.
[7] *Foreign Relations*, Vol. V (1945), p. 858; Vol. VI (1946), p. 708.
[8] *The Cloud of Danger*, pp. 176, 177-8; ENCOUNTER, March 1978.
[9] *The Cloud of Danger*, pp. 154, 179.

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sent their own forces abroad into other countries", says Kennan *Mark II*.

I DO NOT FIND IT unduly surprising that he now repudiates the lessons which once upon a time he learnt in Moscow.

In his *Memoirs* (Vol. 1, pp. 291–2) he already "partly" retracted his famous 1946 rules of conduct *vis-à-vis* the Russians which now (in 1967) he claimed to be only "a useful set of rules for dealing with the Stalin régime":

> *"Don't act chummy with them . . . . Don't assume a community of aims with them which does not really exist . . . . Don't make fatuous gestures of good will . . . . Do not be afraid to use heavy weapons for what seems to us to be minor matters . . . . Do not be afraid of unpleasantness and public airing of differences,"*

etc. Ten years later he has gone on to forget them altogether. In his last book he declared that no Soviet objectives which are in conflict with those of the United States

> "seem to be of such nature as to challenge any vital interest of ours—the only possible exception being Berlin."

The growing Soviet strategic proximity to the Western sources of oil and the life-lines to them are pooh-poohed, but then Kennan *Mark II* has become rather solicitous about *Soviet* strategic interests. He is very much concerned about the Soviet leaders'

> "feelings [which] must be supplemented with a new element of alarm as they sit and watch the pouring of these unconscionable quantities of American weaponry into Saudi Arabia and, more disturbing still, into the neighbouring Iran."

They are, presumably, worried about the threat from the Shah and the Saudi King to "the security of their sensitive southern border" which Kennan solemnly invokes in this context.

NOR IS IT VERY SURPRISING, given this new Kennan *Mark II* attitude, to hear him concluding that there is no cause for alarm for the West although, as we have just seen, this is not necessarily true for the Soviet leaders who do have sensitive causes for alarm. Our own Western apprehensions,

> "which have been used to justify appeals for a totally negative, hostile, and militaristic attitude towards the Soviet Union, have little substance behind them and are not responsive to the real profile of the problem which the existence of the Communist power in Russia presents for American statesmanship."[10]

What can one conclude from this but that Mr Kennan's equanimity has increased *pari passu* with the rise of the Soviet Union as a global power and the shrinkage of American power?

IT TOOK Kennan 20 years to learn about Russian and Soviet expansionism and 30 subsequent years of experience to un-learn it.

When it comes to China, he wisely reminds us in his latest book

> "of the danger of building too extensively, in our foreign relations, on individual personalities at the head of a foreign state. These come and go; the state remains, When it comes to laying out American policies designed to stand the test of time, it is better to look at the long-term interests, and the long-term behaviour, of a state than at the personalities who momentarily head it."

But when it comes to Russia this is forgotten by Kennan *Mark II*. "Stalin is dead"—as some of us have evidently failed to notice—and

> "the régime is headed by a moderate, in fact, conservative man; a man who, whatever failings of outlook he may have, is a man of the middle, a skilled balancer among political forces—a man confidently regarded by all who know him as a man of peace."

Apart from disregarding his own analytical precepts, this kind of assertion raises the simple question: How does George F. Kennan know that Brezhnev "is a man of peace"? And what does he mean by it? Stalin too was "a man of the middle, a skilled balancer among political forces", and neither Stalin nor Khrushchev wanted a global war. Brezhnev does not want it either. But does that make him "a man of peace"? Czechoslovakia, Angola, Somali, and Ethiopia remind us of the contrary. Nor do they indicate, as Kennan asserts, that "as this leadership looks abroad, it sees more dangers than inviting opportunities. Its reactions and purposes are therefore much more defensive than aggressive."[11] He can tell that to the marines—of Admiral Gorshkov operating along the shores of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

One can only applaud Mr Kennan when he calls for an act of humility—"the confession that none of us knows too much about what we are talking about", but I do not find it reassuring to hear him telling us in a curious passage that the present elderly Soviet leadership wants to end

> "its own days peacefully—its members going down in history as constructive leaders who contributed, much more than Stalin and at least as much as Khrushchev, to the advancement of the glory of the Soviet Union and the cause of world communism."[12]

Kennan reiterates in ENCOUNTER the argument about the "peaceful" character of Soviet gerontocrats. He sees them "as highly conservative

[10] *The Cloud of Danger*, pp. 179, 180.
[11] *The Cloud of Danger*, p. 100; ENCOUNTER, March 1978; *The Cloud of Danger*, p. 200.
[12] *The Cloud of Danger*, p. 200.

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men, perhaps the most conservative ruling group to be found anywhere in the world, markedly advanced in age, approaching the end of their tenure, and given to everything else but rash adventure. . . ." This may be true as far as it goes, but does it go far enough? Stalin was over seventy at the time of the Korean war; and in any case, as Kennan himself says, the Leaders come and go but the State remains. Surely the argument about age as an indicator of the "peacefulness" of post-Stalin Russia is just a rationalisation of an older George Kennan's wishful thinking. I remember him at a seminar in Switzerland (which I also attended) expressing similar convictions about Khrushchevian Russia on the basis of the exactly opposite premise: the impending inevitable *rejuvenation* of the Soviet political élite . . . ![13] It is, I fear, no less incongruous to hear Kennan *Mark II* arguing that the Soviet Union is today only concerned with its security:

> "Just as the security (not the expansion) of their own power is the prime consideration for the Soviet leaders when they face their own country, so it is when they face the outside world."

This was the standard argument at the time of the Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam conferences of those men of illusions whom Kennan *Mark I* criticised so harshly in his diplomatic dispatches and who were ready, therefore, to sacrifice to the Russians Eastern Europe which, as Kennan (sarcastically, and inappositely for him today) puts it, "we, by our tacit consent, assigned to their good graces in 1945 . . . ."[14] But it was clear then, as it is clear now, that expansion creates new security problems for the Soviet Union and new "sensitive borders" in turn prompt further expansion. This is another lesson which George Kennan has somehow consigned to the memory-hole.

DESPITE HIS APPEALS for a "detached" and "unemotional" analysis of Soviet developments, he is himself rather emotional; it is a not unendearing human trait, but one that results in some vagaries and inconsistencies. I offer only a few additional examples: one where his sentiments vitiate his *Realpolitik*, and another one where his *Realpolitik* vitiates his Puritan conscience. (Someone has, I think rightly, called him a preacher and a Machiavellian at the same time.)

It is clear from Kennan's *Memoirs* that he does not like the Chinese (who seem to him "lacking in the capacity for pity and the sense of sin") and that he does like the Russians for whom he feels a special affinity ("a spontaneous meeting of minds and temperaments . . . a kinship that comes from being a citizen of a large continental country.") But although China is also "a large continental country", Kennan feels no kinship with it, which is understandable enough; but the sentiments of the kin of Russia lead the *Realpolitiker* to get smothered under the "sense of sin" of a moralist.

> "A real aberration of American thinking about the future of our relations with China is the view that we should 'tilt' our relations with China against the Soviet Union, should try, in other words, to make use of China as an instrument for the advancement of our interests, and the reduction of the Soviet ones, in the Soviet-American relationship. I find it difficult to say how strongly I disapprove of any such suggestion. . . . The Western community must find other, more solid and more positive ways than this of improving its relationship to the Soviet Union than by trying to play China off against it, if the catastrophe we all fear is to be averted and if the great constructive possibilities of the Soviet-American relationship are ultimately to be realized."[15]

Is, then, a balance-of-power policy today just too sinful? Only yesterday "containment" and its ensuing balance for peace were both realistic and moral. Again, it is not surprising that Moscow Radio (on 9 July 1977) quoted these Kennan *Mark II* remarks with satisfaction.

What about the "human rights" question? Here Kennan *Mark II* has strange inhibitions for such an upright man with such a decent record of public and private support for the humane cause of liberalism. This time it is the Moralist who gets smothered by a *Realpolitiker*.

> "The Soviet government asked for trouble, of course, when it signed the Helsinki declarations on human rights. The Western governments are formally on good ground in making this an issue of their relations with Moscow, if they care to do so. But the question remains whether it is wise for them to proceed much further along this path. . . . I should perhaps explain that I yield to no one in my admiration for such men as Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov; I would place them among the greatest Russians of the modern age. Were I a Russian, they would have my deepest gratitude and . . . support. But I am not a Russian." (p. 215)

What is he then? Mr Kennan now admits that he is an American Isolationist, a tag he does not like because of "its extreme connotations." He still advocates the defence of Europe and Japan, and he even grudgingly concedes the need to strengthen the conventional forces of NATO. But

[13] Cf. R. Aron; G. F. Kennan; R. Oppenheimer, et al., *Les colloques de Rheinfelden* (Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1959). Kennan also emphasised his hopes about the "coming generation" in the Soviet Union in his conversation with Melvin J. Lasky (ENCOUNTER, March 1960).

[14] *The Cloud of Danger*, pp. 179, 186.

[15] *The Cloud of Danger*, p. 106.

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he is quite ready to give up all kinds of strategic and military positions. He wants to induce Greece and Turkey to withdraw from NATO; he wants to abandon Korea and the Philippines; and above all he wants to give up the nuclear deterrent by signing an agreement with Russia about the "non-first use of nuclear weapons." Faced with the overwhelming Soviet conventional superiority the Europeans are offered only the advice to strengthen their conventional defences—and to be prepared for civil action and guerrilla warfare . . . under occupation. A wise counsel? A "realistic" prospect? Kennan refers to the heroic resistance during the last War, but forgets that it was only sustained by the hope of an Allied military victory.

In his 1938–1940 dispatches from occupied Prague,[16] Kennan records his sympathies with those "more responsible Czech leaders" who felt that "the cornerstone of any long-term Czech policy must be a *modus vivendi* with the Germans." He deplored "the tendency to romanticism in political thought" among the Czechs (of all people!), and he rejected "the romantic solution of hopeless resistance rather than the humiliating but truly heroic one of realism."[17]

Today Kennan is "not sure that Hacha and the Czechs were wise to yield."[18] But in the wider context it is his original reaction to the consequences of Munich (1938) (which he characterises in his *Memoirs* as one of "temperate optimism" and "not devoid of hope") which underlies his present position. In his dispatch from Prague after Munich, he expressed hope that

> "such changes as occur will lead in the direction of greater economic security and greater racial tolerance for [the Czechoslovak] people sadly in need of both. . . ."

Kennan's evolution is a clean example that *"On revient toujours à ses premiers amours. . . ."* After a life of foreign experience and the emergence of global problems, George Kennan wants to return home to the Middle West, to the homely illusion that America, even with Europe and Japan feeling increasingly abandoned, could withstand the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune in a hostile world. No less illusory is his assertion that Western Europe has no reason to fear "Finlandisation." He even thinks that "today the Finns enjoy complete freedom in their internal affairs", which is palpably untrue.

HE ADVOCATED in 1947 as "Mr X" an "adroit and vigilant application of counterforce" against Soviet expansionism. In 1966 in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, although he emphasised his objections to the way "Containment" was applied, he still thought it necessary. Now, he has in effect given it up. For all practical purposes he has replaced the idea of resistance to Soviet expansionism by appeasement and isolationism.

HOW DID THIS STRANGE EVOLUTION from Containment to Isolationism come about? What led him to such a curiously "unvirtuous and defeatist" attitude? What turned Hamlet into a King Lear who despite his age and experience could not know which of his three daughters was truly attached to him?

He was not altogether wrong about his "self-criticisms" of the three "grievous errors" of "Mr X", even though they were afterthoughts rather than (as he implied) disclaimers. There was indeed little real thought (as against rhetoric) about Eastern Europe. But so-called disengagement, which he proposed, was not a practical solution.

I would be the first to agree that there was indeed an underestimation of the political—as against the military—factor. But Kennan, as Dean Acheson said, "never grasped the realities of power relationships", and he still cannot comprehend the political function of military and strategic factors. At any rate, the increased emphasis on the *political* element in the Containment policy would have intensified rather than diminished what the Russians call "the ideological struggle" (which they have never renounced, unlike George Kennan). Nor can Western strategy be safely reduced to Kennan's simple withdrawal-to-the-industrial-heartland scheme. The price of this isolationist luxury—unprompted declarations of territorial disinterestedness (as in Dean Acheson's ill-fated Korea statement)—is that defence becomes at once more difficult and more expensive, not easier and cheaper.

I would agree with Kennan that there was indeed an error in "globalism": not in the idea of military resistance where necessary, but in the mindless schematism which prevented flexibility and a clear-eyed choice of global strategic priorities.

[16] Kennan, *From Prague after Munich* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 5, 240.

[17] *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 96. I cannot help comparing Kennan's reaction to the Czech events with that of Dorothy Thompson at the time: "I for one believe that if ever the time comes that the antennae of this country are not sensitive to assaults on liberty, wherever these assaults may occur, then this country will have degenerated into an unvirtuous and defeatist senility." *Let the Record Speak* (London, 1939), p. 381.

[18] ENCOUNTER (September, 1976), p. 34.

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BUT GEORGE KENNAN has thrown the baby out with the bathwater. His frustrations led him increasingly to abandon his original concern about the Soviet danger which he began "to wish away" concurrently (as I have pointed out) with the rise of Soviet strength. Yet he cannot explain, in terms of his own arguments, why the Soviet Union spends more on "defence" than the USA—out of a Gross National Product which is half of the American GNP—if the military factor ceases to be effective above a certain level of destructiveness ("overkill"). He attributes to Soviet policy changes which have not occurred and good will which it does not possess.

He is also preoccupied with the search for scapegoats. He admits that at least some people critical of the pseudo-*Détente* policy are "honourable people", indeed his "friends"; and he does "not suspect or disrespect their motives." But he still lumps them all as "the Right." He caricatures their views and cannot conceive "in the bowels of Christ" (in spite of his professed humility) that *he* may be mistaken. He mentions no names, but it behoves him to distinguish between the "chauvinist Right Deviation" and the people whom I mentioned earlier and who differ with George Kennan in their reasoned assessment of the world problems and risks. He even produces a spurious symmetry between "Mr X"-Kennan *Mark I*'s criticism of the Left Deviation and Kennan *Mark II*'s criticism of the Right Deviation. In fact, the Yalta appeasement was not just a matter of the Left, unless he includes therein all his official Establishment superiors in Washington; and the intellectual anti-pseudo-*Détente* critique is not at all just a matter of the Right, unless the word is used in its Orwellian sense and one becomes Right by definition if one is not "friendly to the Soviet Union." (In this sense Kennan *Mark II* moved to the Left but in no other respect, as New Left ideologues would be the first to recognise.)

Without mentioning any names, George Kennan constantly attacks those who, according to him, think that a war with the USSR is "inevitable." But who are they? Only the official Chinese thesis maintains it (and now only in a somewhat diluted form). None of Kennan's serious critics whom he deplores believes it. Why, then, the imputation?

Because originally "Containment" contained two elements: resistance to Soviet expansionism *and* the avoidance of war. George Kennan knows this only too well. But now that he has abandoned one of the elements, he feels impelled to stress the other one against his critics. But why should he doubt that they are every bit as much concerned with the survival of humanity as he is? They do not believe, however, that appeasement is the way to do it. If it leads to the defeat of the West the nuclear danger will not disappear.[19] The prospect of peaceful world-politics in a world of Nuclear Communist powers is not exactly hopeful, as the Sino-Soviet, Vietnamese-Cambodian, and Somali-Ethiopian military clashes indicate. Lenin used to say "Capitalism brings with it war as the cloud brings with it the storm." It is not true today, if it ever was.

GEORGE KENNAN has misjudged "the cloud of danger." The survival of Western civilisation is a necessary pre-condition of holding back "the cloud", and his proposals would only undermine the chances of such survival. His assessment of the world situation tells us more about his psychological evolution than about the real historical perils which the policy of Containment, however inadequate, has so far contributed to avoid. After all, we should not forget the Berlin Blockade (1948–9) and Cuba (1962) when Soviet military threats were decisively frustrated and indeed *contained*. Nor should we forget that Japan is as closely related, geopolitically, to Korea as Western Europe is to the Middle East. That Containment worked in all these contexts, but above all that it worked in the overall context of the global balance of power, is no mean achievement and no reason moodily and irascibly to abandon it when new perils arise and the balance has already been altered to the West's disadvantage.

KENNAN'S EVOLUTION, as I said at the outset, was rooted in a dualism which he obviously could not overcome.[20] The Preacher and the

[19] George Kennan wrote in ENCOUNTER (September 1976) that "no one in his right senses would yield to any such thing as nuclear blackmail", that it cannot "be used for gaining political advantage except against people who, as Stalin said, have weak nerves." He evidently rates European nerves very highly. But he seems to have forgotten European reaction to the Cuban 1962 missile crisis and the 1973 oil embargo, not to mention the possible impact of the Soviet projection of *both* nuclear and conventional power. In a game of "nuclear chess" defeat can be conceded without playing all the moves to the bitter end.

Kennan himself reminded us how the Chinese used to fight their battles. "When they had figured out which side had the stronger forces, victory would be conceded to that side without shooting." In any case, if there is no reason to fear nuclear blackmail, why is Kennan so apprehensive about the possibility of nuclear war and so denunciatory about the bogey-men who allegedly maintain that it is "inevitable"?

[20] The two roles are interestingly juxtaposed in the incident of Mr Kennan's expulsion from the Moscow ambassadorship (1952). When he compared the conditions of foreign diplomats there with those in Nazi Germany, he was declared *persona non grata*. In his *Memoirs* he criticises himself for being foolish. As a diplomat he undoubtedly was; but as a person and as an intellectual he has only told the truth.

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Machiavellian, the diplomat and the intellectual, the official and the non-conformist, the nostalgic conservative and the liberal "progressive", the sophisticated cosmopolitan and the embarrassed isolationist—all these and other dualities have created an imbalance in his political judgment. Dean Acheson was right when he characterised one of his memoranda as

> "typical of its gifted author, beautifully expressed, sometimes contradictory, in which were mingled flashes of prophetic insight and suggestions, as the document itself conceded, of total impracticality.[21]

This applies to the whole political evolution of George Kennan. He has now made a full circle.

He is still under the illusion that "it is much easier for some Americans to understand the Soviet Union than it is for most qualified Continental Europeans and Englishmen. . . ." It would, of course, be silly to generalise about such matters; they are best assessed on the basis of individual performance. But if there is a valid element of the "sociology of knowledge" in the assessment of the evolution of East-West attitudes and views, perhaps I may be permitted to surmise that it is not without significance that George Kennan comes from the Middle West, the cradle of America's traditional isolationism. Even so, his evolution is a very personal matter and it is deplorable that he has un-learned the lessons of Russian and European history. He seems no longer concerned with the need to learn from history. For a politician this is a weakness, for a diplomat an error, for an historian a sin.

[21] *Present at the Creation* (1969), p. 446.

Mill Ruins

One morning
The shuttle's spirit failed to come back
(Japan had trapped it
In a reconstructed loom
Cribbed from smiling fools in Todmorden).

Cloth rotted, in spite of the nursing.
Its great humming abbeys became tombs.

And the children
Of rock and water and a draughty absence
Of everything else
Roaming for leftovers

Smashed all that would smash
What would not smash they burned
What would not burn

They levered loose and rolled down hillsides.

Then trailed away homeward aimlessly
Like the first
Homeless Norsemen.

Ted Hughes

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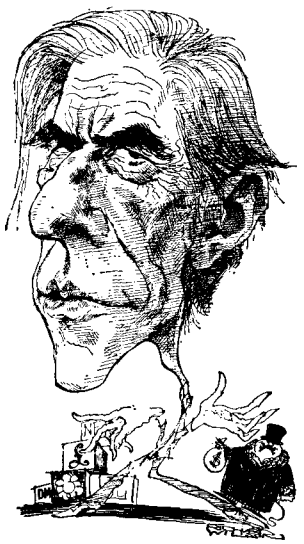
Galbraith on Minogue

And Vice Versa—By JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH



I APPRECIATE very much the invitation to respond to Mr Minogue's formidable assault in the December ENCOUNTER, and I have taken due note of the Editor's indication of some slight embarrassment in his covering note. I would like to reassure all concerned. No one need be troubled. There is something to be said, in a very sympathetic way, on Mr Minogue's side. *Specifically the* Minogue complaint is one that I have encountered many times before and it is largely valid. Precisely as he charges, and regrets, I use good writing and what I like to regard as innocent fun to ingratiate myself with my audience, hold its attention and, of course, to try to persuade it of truths which scholars of archaic or unabashedly conventional mind deeply disapprove. My resulting advantage such scholars almost universally regard as unfair. As they see it I'm sure it is.

And for Mr Minogue the sense of injustice instilled by the work under review must have been especially great. I do not think that the book and its television counterpart quite reached the tens of millions on both sides of the Atlantic that he suggests and deplores. (The programmes are currently being shown on local stations three times a week as a repeat performance which does suggest some, if more modest, success.) But I did, assuredly, seek the largest possible audience. And I did not, so far as I understand them, neglect the peculiar problems of holding the attention of television viewers. Where amusement, anecdote, reminiscence, digression seemed to serve, I used them. None of these possibilities are open to my distinguished critic. He is a wholly grammatical writer, which is something in this day and age. But, if I may be candid, he is given to a rather pedestrian prose form which he combines with virtuous indignation, an unpleasantly assertive view of his own superior scholarship, and deep gloom. Nothing more certainly repels readers and listeners, leaves a person at more of a disadvantage with the ideas that he seeks to purvey.

BUT THERE ARE ALSO, regrettably, some difficulties with Mr Minogue's ideas and their saleability. Judging from that of my case which most arouses his indignation, he believes, among other things, *that the great rich of the last century were public* benefactors, that the generals of World War I were men of high intellectual capacity, that ruling élites were rarely stupid and never funny, that to be with John Stuart Mill is an indication of error, to be discovered in this company by Milton Friedman powerfully affirms that error, and that no one should be an economic determinist. These are hard positions to defend, even by a literate, cheerful, emotionally balanced and otherwise persuasive scholar. One can understand the frustrations and even anger of Mr Minogue when he faces the task of furthering these beliefs with his prose.

I am not so compassionate as to offer him my assistance. But I do counsel the Editor to feel no guilt. It was good, decent, charitable and maybe even psychologically therapeutic to give Mr Minogue a chance to rid himself, however briefly, of his frustrations. I sympathise and even applaud.

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The Galbraithian Fallacy

By Kenneth Minogue

MY CRITICISM of Professor Galbraith's style (though one might not have guessed it from his comments) was incidental to a wider-ranging criticism of his approach to human affairs in general. Professor Galbraith believes that social and political problems are essentially simple; I believe them to be essentially complex. The point can be illustrated from the last few pages of *The Age of Uncertainty* where, in a mood of mellow conclusion, we are told that

> "Few social problems, if any, are difficult of solution. The difficulty, all but invariably, is in confronting them. We know what needs to be done; for reasons of inertia, pecuniary interest, passion or ignorance, we do not wish to say so.... The greatest support to evasion comes from complexity."

One of the problems included under this rubric is that of the population explosion. We certainly do know how to stop populations from "exploding": people just need to stay away from each other a bit more. And it is certainly true that if it weren't for inertia, passion, and ignorance, such self-restraint might indeed happen. But inertia, passion, and ignorance are, on one plausible description, exactly what the problem consists in. Professor Galbraith's fallacy—should we perhaps recognise his grandeur in this field and name it the Galbraithian fallacy?—consists in missing the point of a problem by the cunning device of reallocating the problem itself to the status of incidental brakes on making the solution effective. The Galbraithian treatment of such social problems as "Over-population" thus appears, once this point is clear, in its true complexion as the most devastating banality: there would be no population problem if people didn't sleep together so much, or if they used contraceptives more. Similarly, there would be no threat of Nuclear Destruction if the nuclear powers would only sit down and negotiate, leaving aside their selfish competition for power and only putting the good of humanity before them. Nor would there be any problem of Poverty if the rich gave their wealth to the poor —although this might perhaps create a new problem of who looks after the ex-rich.[1] And so on down the line of problems discussed.

Everybody in fact knows the conditions for the solution of the problem; but other people don't snatch at a sense of superiority by confusing the conditions for the solution of a problem with the problem itself.

IN MY CRITICISM of Professor Galbraith, I went further than this by suggesting that this kind of theoretical simplicity constituted a peculiar political danger. It is the simplicity of despotism.

In what I wrote before, I emphasised that the Galbraithian distortion of the past for the purpose of flattering the present constituted the favourite device by which despots tried to make themselves loved by their subjects. The point can be universalised if we imagine Stalin contemplating the problem of collectivising agriculture. There's no real problem here, he might well remark, apart from "the inertia, pecuniary interest, passion and ignorance" of the peasantry, especially the kulaks. And Stalin had ways of "confronting" these irrelevant complexities. Again, it used to be said that partition could not possibly be a solution to the Cyprus question because Greeks and Turks were both geographically and economically too closely intermingled. But it has in fact proved to be the case that, given overwhelming military force, partition can indeed be a kind of solution to the problem. But like all such solutions, it involves a vast amount of human misery. With solutions like that, we shall soon begin to find our problems a lot more lovable.

Professor Galbraith is, then, an exponent of what may be called despotic simplicities, those likely to appeal to the people who have a lot of force at their command and are quite prepared to use it. The relevant contrast is with those masters

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[1] Jean-Paul Sartre tries to swim in these deep waters in *Le Diable et le bon Dieu* (1948).

NASTY: *Il y a deux espèces de pauvres, ceux qui sont pauvres ensemble et ceux qui le sont tout seuls. Les premiers sont les vrais, les autres sont les riches qui n'ont pas eu de chance.*
GOETZ: *Et les riches qui ont donné leurs biens, ce ne sont pas des pauvres non plus, j'imagine.*
NASTY: *Non, ce sont d'anciens riches.*

NASTY: There are two types of poor, those who are poor together, and those who are poor all by themselves. The former are the real poor, the others are the rich who've had bad luck.
GOETZ: And the rich who have given away their wealth, they are not the poor either, I imagine.
NASTY: No. They are the ex-rich.

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of political complexities under whose rule we now, for the most part, live.

Professor Galbraith is, I am sure, the kindest of men, and would deplore the sufferings that result from any actual practice of despotic simplification. But the closer he gets to the simplicities of this kind of punditry, the more he begins to resemble Mr Magoo, the intrepid myopic of the cartoons who was always to be found wandering in and out of the lairs of ferocious bears, and sauntering along the edges of precipices. God help us all when Mr Magoo becomes the Pied Piper.

IT IS THESE CONSIDERATIONS which seemed to me important in discussing Professor Galbraith's style of popularisation. I am all in favour of clarity, amusing digression, and the attempt to translate the not infrequently pompous use of technicalities by specialists into a language to be understood by the intelligent layman. Professor Galbraith has often performed yeoman service in this field in the past. But the fatal attraction of a rhetoric of superiority in dealing with social and political questions seems to have edged him more and more towards caricaturing the world, and the human beings with whom we few intelligent chaps unfortunately have to share it. This is no longer a matter of mere stylistic self-indulgence, but gives support to that special and dangerous form of human impatience which believes that everything would be lovely if only people weren't so damned stupid.

Finally, I will accept that Professor Galbraith is just having innocent fun, if he will refrain from calling my indignation virtuous and my prose grammatical. He cannot be allowed to get away with insults like that!

P. J. Kavanagh

The Lost Refinement

Do this morning the dead, turned inwards towards brightness,
Over their shoulders feel pictures of living arrive?
Recall the old tenderness of dusky, windswept mornings,
Overgrown verges bent under weight of sky,
Everything blackish, solid, with clear-cut edges
And birds splashing like fishes in soaking hedges?

Remember ruffledness, confinement, imperfections,
And today turn to us? How, touching the inside of a youthful elbow,
They stared appalled at all older than they were,
Suddenly saw their fate? For now they know we do not know we relish
The end of love, evaporation of children,
While we enjoy them. Love our own death even,

For melancholy is our atmosphere. Like autumns
We watch our own departing. We must like it.
The only way to lose regret to die?

The road shines wet, the sky is dead, the hairy hedges
Are blackest at this season. As though they think
The passer knows some answer, sheep huddle and watch
Him turn the corner, move their heads as one. (When he peei
He sees them watch a while his disappearance.)
Why do the dead come winging then, our melancholies
Lost on them, over a hedge so black, now, against greyness
And make the air go still? They knock at our confinement
Soft as breath; yearn for sadness like a lost refinement.

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LETTERS

Spinelli's Slip

GEORGE URBAN was too generous to Altiero Spinelli, in the "Conversation" in the January ENCOUNTER. For he let pass unchallenged Spinelli's statement (p. 14): "The Communists had before them the example of Allende: a government which had the majority of the national vote behind it and which ought to have been able to govern, but in fact was not."

At no time did Allende have majority support. In the September 1970 presidential election he won 36% of the votes cast, 40,000 more than the second candidate in a three-man race. In the legislative elections of March 1973 his supporters could, even with the help of extensive malpractices, muster only 43% of the vote; a result which the left-wing daily *Puro Chile* announced in high Rousseauian style under the headline:

THE PEOPLE: *43%* THE REACTIONARIES: *55%*

Spinelli's further contention is equally misleading. For the Army coup occurred only after President Allende had for a long time been governing in a flagrantly unconstitutional way, in pursuit of irreversible change. Thus on 22 August 1973 the Chamber of Deputies resolved to this effect, continuing:

> "It is a fact that the present government, from the beginning, has attempted to seize total power, with the evident purpose of subjecting everyone to the most rigorous economic and political controls, and of achieving by this means the installation of a totalitarian régime absolutely opposed to the system of representative democracy that the constitution upholds."

The fact that the Euro-Communist parties, like the dominant Left of the British Labour Party, support Allende's aims is itself one more significant indication of the insincerity of their democratic pretensions. For, as Clement Attlee well said after our 1950 election: "Democracy is not a one-way street."

ANTONY FLEW

Department of Philosophy
University of Reading

Hook and Brecht, & Stalin

PROFESSOR HOOK (March) states that I *hold* a certain *view* on what Brecht meant when he uttered the remark in question. In fact I merely reported that Klaus Voelker considered that Professor Hook's criticism of the Moscow trials was an evidence of "stupidity and intellectual limitations." I then added that in fact Brecht's remark might have had other and more subtle *implications*, which I pointed out. These implications certainly are there whether Brecht meant them, or was aware of them, or not. And I then added:

> "Brecht's remark could thus appear to have been at least a highly ambiguous and ironical one."

A close reading of the above with its subjunctive (*could*) and its insistence that this might merely be an appearance rather than a stated fact should thus reveal that I carefully refrained from taking sides in the matter. My concern was to point out how coarse-grained, unsubtle, and insensitive Herr Voelker had been in reporting the incident in the manner he did.

Nevertheless, personally, I feel that Brecht was far more critical of the Moscow Trials than he appeared to be. He may well have been afraid that letting his opposition to the Trials and to Stalin be known might hurt him with the Party (precisely because he was known to have had close relations to heretics like Karl Korsch); and at that time he could not risk a break with the Party for various more or less meretricious reasons.

Professor Hook's account of the incident is undoubtedly correct. Yet when he heard of the execution of Tretyakov Brecht wrote the extremely moving poem which I quoted in my article. Brecht was an opportunist and very sly in holding his cards close to his chest. And he was not above using very involved tactics of survival. His brother once told me that when he visited Brecht in Denmark shortly before the outbreak of the War, Brecht advised him (the brother was teaching "paper manufacture" at the Darmstadt Technical University) to join the Nazi Party as quickly as possible—and try to get on, if possible to the rank of *Gauleiter* within it—because otherwise the anti-Nazi activities of his Bolshevik brother might get him into trouble! A man who thought like that might well have risked being thrown out by a known anti-Stalinist, merely to keep his record with the Party unblemished.

That is why, although I cannot be dogmatic about it, I still feel that very deep down Brecht did *not* approve of the Moscow Trials. I find it ironical that on this point Professor Hook and the primitive Left-conformist Voelker seem to be in total agreement.

MARTIN ESSLIN

Department of Drama
Stanford University

Toscanini & Furtwängler

YEHUDI MENUHIN's opinions of Toscanini and Furtwängler are his own; likewise his opinion of B. H. Haggin, to whose fierce integrity and independence of outlook pens more exalted than mine will testify.

To turn to more palatable matters of fact: Mr Menuhin fails to comprehend Mr Haggin's cardinal virtue of presenting authoritative, first-hand accounts of many a misquoted incident. "Old gossip" is indeed worthless; but old gossip by dint of repetition turned to gospel truth is positively dangerous to the reputation of those concerned. By giving us, among others, an unvarnished account of the famous encounter of the two conductors at Salzburg, Mr Haggin sweeps away current hagiographical rehashes (I borrow from Mr Menuhin) while throwing fresh light on their characters.

As for Mr Menuhin's own contribution, Toscanini was "as a matter of fact" by no means intolerant of all his colleagues. He held a high opinion of, among

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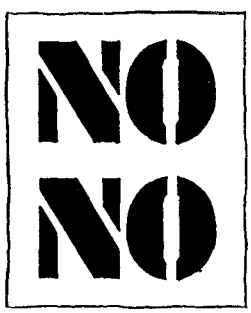
others, Steinbach, von Schuch, Kleiber, Ansermet and Cantelli. And who was "steeped in tradition"—in whom did it betray "a lack of depth"—as Toscanini calmly pointed out the approval of Brahms' chosen interpreter (Steinbach) when Furtwängler berated him for his handling of that composer? The easy generalisations crumble in the face of a concrete example.

So, too, does Mr Menuhin's implied contrast between the "scholarly" Furtwängler and the Toscanini who preferred to read no books. In fact, the latter's knowledge of English literature in the original, particularly of Shakespeare and the great romantic poets, was sufficient for him to cherish much of it by heart; so also of Goethe in German, and of course his countryman Dante. In his old age Rilke engaged his attention; and he even took to writing poetry, again in English. George R. Marek in his volume on the conductor is only the latest to discuss this side of Toscanini's character which was, perhaps, kept too well-hidden from those preferring literacy (not to mention pseudo-philosophical ponderosities) to be worn by musicians as a badge of merit.

CHRISTOPHER DYMENT

London

On Freud, Eysenck & Critical Passions



WE ARE PLEASED that Dr H. J. Eysenck [ENCOUNTER, Jan.] concluded that our book on *The Scientific Credibility of Freud's Theories and Therapy*—is "interesting" and a "valuable adjunct." However, he obviously feels displeased with our effort to weigh the scientific evidence bearing on Freud's ideas. Our chief objective in this effort was to look at Freud with balanced fairness. Over the years, the heated exchanges between Freud's supporters and opponents have grated us. We could not envision a constructive resolution to their endless animosity which is cloaked in pseudo-reason. We felt that the time had come to turn away from such vitriol and toward the goal of evenhandedly adding up the scientific data. We are pleased that four previous reviews of our book have singled out the qualities of fairness, balance, and comprehensiveness in our approach. Eysenck's deep dislike of psychoanalysis is evident in his review of our book and is, of course, already widely known from his numerous other public scoldings of Freud. Interestingly, the prime virtue he assigned to our book was that we did detect defects in certain of Freud's formulations. However, he was piqued because we were not critical enough. Apparently only a total denunciation of psychoanalysis can win his approval.

Eysenck's attack on Freud derives from a scenario in which he is the hard-headed scientist dedicated to facts and his Viennese opponent is a soft-headed manufacturer of theories. Eysenck has repeatedly denounced psychoanalysis for putting its head in the sand and ignoring what science has to say. However, this ostrich-like posture is exactly the one he displays. He unilaterally refuses even to consider numerous studies we cited because they employ techniques whose validity he simply denies. For example, he rejects any evidence obtained with the Rorschach Inkblot test. He tells us that he once did a study of the Rorschach test that turned out negatively. Therefore, the test is invalid! But he forgets to mention (or does not know) that thousands of studies of the Rorschach test have been completed and that the last three reviews of this literature in the prestigious *Annual Review of Psychology* have shown the Rorschach to have great research versatility and to be a sensitive measure of various personality dimensions. We do not mean to imply that the Rorschach test does not have defects. It obviously does. But so do all psychological tests, including those with which Eysenck has been closely identified. If one were to reject all findings derived from instruments that have some defects, the social sciences would be wiped out—including Eysenck's own laboratory.

EYSENCK'S APPEAL to passion in his zest to denounce Freud is apparent. He attempts to mobilise our awe of authority by telling us that no less a personage than Sir Peter Medawar, Nobel-Prize winner in medicine, believes "psychoanalysis won't do." Presumably, if a Nobel-Prize winner dislikes psychoanalysis it must be worthless. Eysenck does not tell us what evidence Medawar marshalled to justify his denunciation. The list of "great authorities" who have issued statements for or against Freud is endless. It is just such citation of authority rather than solid fact that has impeded a fair test of Freud's theories for decades.

Another device employed by Eysenck to discredit the scientific information bearing on Freud that we presented was to mention two studies he knew about that he regarded as being of unmatched importance, but which we did not include in our review. He seriously insists that since we did not include them, the analyses of the other innumerable studies described in our book may not be reliable! Actually, we were well acquainted with one of the studies, by Scodel, he mentioned. (This study, which argues that if the oral character theory is correct men should prefer large-breasted women, was reviewed by one of us in a previous book.) However, while Eysenck considered it to be of extreme import, we felt that it missed the

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point. There was nothing in the oral character theory that would predict that dependent men should prefer breasts of a particular size in women. Eysenck apparently has forgotten that the theory states that either over- or under-indulgence of oral needs in the child may produce oral character traits. The oral character would be expected to be unusually concerned about breasts, whether large or small. Scodel's study did not permit an evaluation of breast interest, as such. Incidentally, we were not familiar with the second (Russian) study by Luria so valued by Eysenck which deals with dreaming; but numerous other papers we described have already shown similar results.

Eysenck questioned whether it is meaningful to evaluate Freud's theories without examining whether they are empirically powerful as alternative theories. We agree. Despite his statement to the contrary, we did examine alternatives to Freud's views in such diverse areas as Dream interpretation, formation of the Superego, and resolution of the Oedipal struggle. We did suggest a number of revisions of Freud's theories to fit competing viewpoints as the evidence dictated. Relatedly, it should be specifically noted that we disagree with Eysenck's claim that behaviour therapy has been shown to be a clearly superior alternative to psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy. The scientific data do not at present support this belief.

WE WILL FORGO DEALING with other minor points raised by Eysenck. However, we reiterate that the time has come to approach psychoanalysis dispassionately. It is not, as Eysenck would have us believe, an entity to be totally accepted or rejected as a package. No, it is a complex structure consisting of many parts. We have proposed that some of the parts be accepted as valid, others rejected, and still others partially reshaped. We hope this more rational approach will flourish as a consequence of our making available in one volume the basic material necessary to judge Freud's theories as they touch on such diverse areas as sexuality, dream interpretation, paranoia, child development, and psychotherapy.

SEYMOUR FISHER,
ROGER P. GREENBERG

College of Medicine
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THE REPLY BY Fisher and Greenberg to my critique of their book on Freud does not seem to add much to the discussion. They claim that my views are "passionate"; as they have not carried out any psychophysiological studies of my emotions while writing it we may perhaps dismiss this as an *argumentum ad hominem*. They claim to have looked at Freud with balanced fairness; it is precisely this claim which I doubt. Readers will no doubt make up their own mind on these points.

Fisher and Greenberg tend to overwrite in their desire to discredit my critique. I mentioned a few studies which ought to be included in any proper evaluation which claimed to be reasonably complete; the authors claim that I regarded these "as being of unmatched importance." This is of course nonsense; they are simply studies of the same kind of quality as those actually reviewed, and better than some; it is not clear to me why they were disregarded and others included.

It is true that Fisher and Greenberg do occasionally mention alternative theories, but they do so sparingly, and often leave out theories which to my mind are much more powerful than those actually mentioned. It is certainly time, as they say, to approach psychoanalysis dispassionately. Fisher and Greenberg have come nearer to this ideal than many other authors; my point is that they have not achieved perfection. As their book will undoubtedly be very influential, it seemed worthwhile to point out some of its weaknesses, rather than dwell on its strong points. Their answer does nothing to persuade me that these weaknesses, which I singled out, are non-existent.

H. J. EYSENCK

Institute of Psychiatry
Maudsley Hospital
London

Literacy & Me

GRAMMAR LESSONS from ENCOUNTER, October, 1977: "Can we expect literacy in our children", ENCOUNTER asks, "when the legend on the yellow Post Office vans proclaims, 'Everyone should have a phone of their own'. . . ?" (p. 96)

And, one might also ask, when ENCOUNTER allows historian A. J. P. Taylor to write, "I am no better than anyone else, and no one else is better than me"? (p. 53)

GWYNN NETTLER

Edmonton
Canada

Independent Algeria

ALISTAIR HORNE reports in your issue for November 1977 on the four years of travail leading to his *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–62*—interestingly, and inexactly.

He says that 95% of all Algerians speak French. The 1966 census reports that 19% (v.1, p. 109) read and write French. No doubt there are more speakers than readers and writers; but the French of illiterates is not exactly functional in any of the UNESCO definitions. Furthermore, the literacy campaign of recent years aimed at Arabic, while among the emigrants to Europe must have been a high proportion of French speakers. (The survey around 1970 asked about mother tongue and literacy in French, but did not report them.)

The road signs are no longer indicators of cultural ties with the colonial power: they have been *all* painted over, even when they were in French only, even street names in towns. Maybe to that extent they are true indicators of Algerian feelings. A slow Arabic reader (such as the undersigned) becomes a road hazard at each cross-road.

There never was much mystery about the marital status of President Boumedienne. After he took a

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Down with the Alphabet!

ALL OF OUR CULture is influenced by the reactionary class structure of our society, and the present alphabet is no exception to the sociological rule. It is obvious at a glance how the organic unity of words is dissolved into a superficial and lifeless series of individual letters: *A, B, C, D, E* . . . . Here, from the point of view of emancipatory critical analysis, is reflected the loneliness and helplessness of liberal individualism, with all its characteristics of alienation and exploitation.

Consider further the class basis of the semantic superstructure of bourgeois culture. The very letters are divided into two groups, one of which has the privilege of sounding off in élitarian fashion, while the mass of others remain underprivileged. Vowels and consonants—social mirror-images of our divided society, bourgeoisie and proletariat!

*The élitarian vowels are evenly spread through the alphabet. But behind this even-handedness which only wears a mask of equality one can detect the ugly realities of formal democracy: namely, its basic exploitative structure, for among the class privileges of "*A*" are the working services of* B, C, *and* D*; "*E*" controls the surplus value of* F, G, H, *etc. etc. There is, as in the history of capitalism, an early competitive phase, which ends in late-capitalist monopolies.* A *is the monopolist at the head of the authoritarian pyramid.* E *and* I *and the others enjoy some minor company perks, but are in reality—and in the last analysis—reduced to dependency and a quasi-lumpenproletarian status.*

THE SHARPENING *of these contradictions is clear from the laws of motion which govern the primitive accumulation of letters into words. Consonants by themselves are not free to produce words. They are wage-dependent on the vowels. Here is the symbol of a harsh truth which tears the mask away from all the established myths—the immiseration of the silent majority, unable to speak with its own voice and in its own words. An honest and perceptive peasant saw through the conspiracy long ago and called it "abracadabra."*

Vowels, on the other hand, enjoy the right to form words and expressions all by themselves—the decadent poet has his *"O!"*, the middle-class pedant has his *i.e.*, and the anti-social gambler his *"IOU."* Such concentrations match the arrogated rights of corporations and multi-national cartels. For every *"O!"* an ICI, for every *"IOU"* an ITT. It is no accident that the parasitic landowning gentry (see Nancy Mitford) called their speech customs *"U"* (as against the brutally inelegant *"Non-U"*); so that the military-industrial complex's atomic energy authority is known as the AEA.

Only in the socialist countries is the expropriation of such multi-privileges to be discerned in the innovative democratic centralism of consonants, mirroring the newly-won privileges of an emancipated working class. Social research indicates that this progressive process has gone furthest in People's Yugoslavia, and the island of Krk provides the exemplary leading model.

BUT SOCIOLOGICAL CONTENT ANALYSIS *and research in depth also put into proper social context those elements of bourgeois writing which usually escape class-conscious classification—namely: dashes, apostrophes, and other items of punctuation. Is there a conspiracy of silence here? This might well be, for there are secret functions and services at work. The word-splitting divisiveness of apostrophe and dash unmask themselves in all their lumpenproletarian servility to the ruling class whose best interests are served by the divide-and-rule precept. Their bourgeois origins are clearly suggested by the role played by accents: for instance, the* e *with an alien and alienating* aigu, *thus: é, or even more acutely: è. Here are the rootless cosmopolitans among the vowels, slipping away from the class forms of the bourgeois world, elements without any sense of social solidarity, scabs and strike-breakers in fact. It is no accident that the bourgeois alphabet fails to speak out freely on this matter, indeed maintains a suspect silence on such grave matters.*

Nor is this all—for there remains so-called proper punctuation. This is where authoritarian control asserts itself, for the punctuation marks are the judges and the prosecutors, the cops and the bulls, of the whole system, the pigs which snort their way through the whole sty of established society. Thus is law and order maintained. As for the white spaces between words which darken the whole page of our shadowy culture, it is again no accident that they are left empty, with meanings and truths suppressed or omitted, in a vain attempt to escape the dialectical sharpness of critical analysis—what, or rather who, is here at work but the agents of the CIA and allied secret services?

THERE CAN BE NO ESCAPING *the conclusions which stare us in the face: as Lenin used to remind us, "Who says* A, *must say* B. . . ." *The alphabet is a class contrivance devised in order to disguise and camouflage the brutal authoritarianism of capitalist society, and to force the working class to speak and write in a fashion not its own, in fact in a style of the class enemy.*

Here there is only one way out, and only one solution: the Revolution.

Smash the alphabetas, the alligators of civilisation. *Gggrr-rksksk-zxzxzx!*

J.C.

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second wife, her photograph appeared in national newspapers while casting a vote.

The French *midi* architecture—it is true—is still there . . . from a distance, because on closer quarters one notices the privacy-increasing shutters and high fences demanded by the Moslem style of living. Many of the one hundred "liberation villages", models built to celebrate the victory, stand empty, I am told, because not designed to meet Moslem needs. Thus, the van Gogh-like pictures, as one drives into the country, are deceptive.

In 1969 or 1970 I took a photograph of the poster of the Hungarian Industrial Exhibition in Algiers, because it was the only Arabic inscription in public. Last summer, it took quite a time to find one remaining inscription in French. Let there be no doubt about the deliberation with which the Algerians are moving in their chosen direction.

KAROL KROTKI

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I AM AT SOME disadvantage to answer the linguistic points raised by Mr Krotki and admit to finding his own syntax somewhat hard to follow. But I will do my best.

First of all, regarding the figures of francophone Algerians, a question which has already been raised elsewhere: I had hoped I had made it quite clear that the allusion referred to spoken familiarity with the language, and *not* literacy. It would have been helpful, however, if instead of singling out from the 1966 census the one statistic of 19% of those literate in French, Mr Krotki had gone on to add the further revealing figures—namely, that *only* 5·5% of Algerians were literate in Arabic alone; and a total of no less than 74·6% were rated illiterate. Of these 74·6% illiterates, I think it must be assumed that a very considerable number (certainly at the time of the 1966 census) were conversant with *spoken* French. I have no idea how many (nor, I am sure, has Mr Krotki). The figure of 95% (which I was given in Algeria) frankly surprised me; though I must admit that, in the course of all my interviews, I met only one Algerian who could not speak some French.

As regards the other points raised by Mr Krotki, I do not know to which year he is referring. I was writing, as I stated, from a dateline of 1973. At that time I found no road-signs painted over. If I had, not being able to read Arabic, I should doubtless have found myself as lost as Mr Krotki seems to have been. Perhaps he was expecting them to be inscribed in Hungarian? Again, as of 1973 the British Ambassador (who presumably might have been expected to know the name of the First Lady of the country to which he was accredited) was unable to throw any light upon the mystery of Mrs Boumedienne.

Finally, I simply do not understand what point Mr Krotki is trying to make in his paragraph about "privacy-increasing" shutters and buildings "not designed to meet Moslem needs." Perhaps he will write and explain privately, preferably in a common tongue. Meanwhile may I commend him to read *A Savage War of Peace* when it is published in Canada, in the hope that he will find the inexactitudes of which he complains dealt with in greater detail there than in my article.

ALISTAIR HORNE

London

Roy Fuller & the Arts

MR ROY FULLER'S spirited defence in ENCOUNTER (October) of his belief "that public money for the arts cannot be properly dispensed without a strong regard in the dispensing body for standards of excellence and principles of value" is no less than timely. But even Mr Fuller's article can hardly be said to face up to the problem squarely. For who can afford the luxury of neutrality when the difficulty that faces the Arts Council is one that confronts each and every one of us. Clearly, as a body of "experts" it has no access to any principle that would enable it to surmount a dilemma that is part and parcel of our times. The problem is this: the Arts Council is called upon to be, and with its monies, the public Patron to something it simply cannot define. Our society has no adequate and workable definition of art that is widely acceptable.

The problem has been with us for a long time and merely descended to another level when, in the early '60s, we witnessed on a scale as never before the convergence of culture with entertainment. Most serious attempts at "maintenance of standards and values" (Mr Fuller's words) were thereafter abandoned in a hurried and near wholesale capitulation to Pop Culture's "flag of convenience."

A definition guarantees nothing but it can provide a point of reference by which to get one's bearings in the search for principles. Given that ours is an argumentative age in which nothing is ever agreed upon, and given that we are far from the ordered neatness of the Scholastics who defined art as "a virtue of the practical intelligence", can one venture a short if somewhat abstract formulation? A work of art is not defined by the *fact* that it excites one's sensibility (though that must remain a condition of art), but in the *realisation* that as an act of "making" it plunges the roots of the consciousness of both its creator and its patron (*i.e.* the person whose real need it is designed to meet) into the very essence of their being.

Such a formulation situates art between the province of manual work on the one hand and spiritual experience on the other, allowing for the skill of the craftsman no less than the "inspiration" of the visionary. It takes account of the inherent possibilities of man to the fullest extent and therefore cuts across those "reductionist" forms of "art" that simplistically see man as a bundle of sensations seeking stimulation.

Moreover, it is commensurate with the most long-standing of intellectual traditions as well as the findings of two artists who are arguably the finest English painters of this century—David Jones and Cecil Collins, both still barely known to the public at large. As proof that even the Royal Academy is no bulwark against the encroaching tide of capitulation, significantly, these are the very two artists of unquestioned

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distinction conspicuously absent from their survey *British Painting 1952–1977*. The implication is clear. To sail under a "flag of convenience" is to preclude any possibility of arriving at "standards of excellence and principles of value." Even our vast and ubiquitous entertainment industry prides itself on having those.

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"Better Red than Dead"

AS TO THE "Better Red than Dead" problem or dilemma or chimera or maybe mirage (ENCOUNTER, Letters, September, p. 94), it was nicely disposed of by Hannah Arendt in her book *On Revolution* (p. 4, U.S. edition):

> "Those who say 'better dead than red' actually think: The losses may not be as great as some anticipate, our civilization will survive; while those who say 'better red than dead' actually think: Slavery will not be so bad, man will not change his nature, freedom will not vanish from the earth forever. In other words, the bad faith of the discussants lies in that both dodge the preposterous alternative they themselves have proposed; they are not serious."

All very obvious, of course. Or so one would think until seeing the rather more preposterous efforts of (even very formidable) people to *make* the matter serious.

HERB GREER

London

Alienated Intellectuals?

I FEEL MOVED to reply to A. D. Harvey's article "The Alienated Intellectual Today", an article which is a patchwork of conflicting styles intended I believe to gloss over several inconsistencies of attitude and faulty logic. In arguing that society is producing a potentially harmful surplus of graduates by its "policy of indiscriminate higher education" (presumably he feels securely on the side of discriminator with his Oxford and Cambridge education, rather than that of the discriminated against), he surely provides us with a supreme example of the need for more effective education. Even the majority of his "unemployable" surplus intellectuals would not confuse irrelevancies, hypothesis, and personal convictions to the extent he achieves.

His opening quotation from Bacon is surely unfairly applied to the present situation. In 1611 the lack of fields in which a degree was advantageous—the church, the universities, the law—combined with social and economic immobility made "surplus" graduates, "unfit for other vocations." But today when careers in banking, supermarkets, libraries, teaching and an infinite number of fields both in Britain and abroad call for educational qualifications of all kinds, it is rather incongruous to resort to 17th-century authorities. The opening paragraph goes on to ask, "Why has no attempt been made to assess whether the current over-production of graduates . . . poses a similar threat to Britain in the final quarter of the 20th century?" But Mr Harvey does not go on to fill the gap he perhaps justly recognises. Instead he throws up a smokescreen of statistics, takes his case as proven, and proceeds to assume that the situation he hypothesised into existence was real and unquestionable. As a result he swings violently from statistical evidence to a series of "sweeping generalisations"—one of the very traits he criticises in his surplus graduates—"The unemployed graduate . . . is left to see matters only in terms of sweeping generalisations . . . *i.e.* in extremist terms." For example (examples being notably lacking in Mr Harvey's writing), "All societies are based on contradictions"; "today, in the mid-1970s, students are more apathetic" (than in the 1960s); and "Today's student doesn't know what is to become of the world, and doesn't care." Can Mr Harvey be serious? or is he simply too apathetic to use his intellectual abilities? He certainly makes no qualifications and singularly disproves his own implied statement that graduates, "have been trained with a view to developing their critical faculties." We must also notice that he slips into the present tense and speaks with personal conviction. For example, his categorical statement: "We are fostering a potential threat to the survival of our political institutions."

NOT SATISFIED WITH statistics or slick generalisations to win support for his shaky conjectures, interlaced for all their personal assurance with "probably"s, "may"s, and "might"s, he even sinks to emotive clichés of the most hackneyed class. Can he really have intended to have written, "at least unemployed unskilled workers never spent the best years of their lives being dragooned through the exam system by false promises"? "The best years of their lives" (like "real life" a paragraph later) is not even acknowledged as hack by inverted commas. What promises? What "best years"? What dragooning, since further education is optional? Mr Harvey assumes that undergraduates are essentially naive, if one can allow a sentence weighed with double negatives to carry any weight. But he does not explore the proportion of students with working experience or the relationship between these and the figures of unemployed graduates. He simply says, in a typically peculiar sentence: "Practical experience, as a teacher, a businessman, a civil servant, might well convince someone that real life is more complex than he might previously have supposed." Supposition, based largely upon the author's personal experience it seems, is the quicksand upon which he builds.

In fact, his experience in educational fields appears extremely inadequate for forming conclusions about the future of the country as a whole. Is it safe to draw conclusions from the fact that "Jim Greenfield, one of the *Angry Brigade* bombers, had a father who was a long-distance lorry driver, but most of the dropped-out graduates I [Mr Harvey] know have parents of professional status?" Again he sinks to unqualified generalisation—"Universities must also be recognised as a particularly effective way of estranging children

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from parents." Is this so? And I would question the rather emotive use of the word "children."

MR HARVEY NAME-DROPS John Stuart Mill but himself lacks the spirit of Mill's conception of education as a vital broadening of the mind, which in itself can raise the standard of living in a society (though less materially than cheaper groceries, admittedly), *and* valuable for its own sake. Educational expansion is thus rewarding to both individual and community, nullifying the question of Britain's needing (or not needing) more English graduates. It is only narrow-mindedness to conclude that English graduates are only fit for English-related jobs. Any qualification has its primary (*i.e.* subject) aspect; but only slightly less important is the general measure of application and self-discipline that it implies. The latter can never be "wasted"; and unlike the former, it is seldom mere "self-indulgence."

As for the question of finance, Mr Harvey comes close to contradicting himself. He says within the space of three sentences that the individual is forced to pay for his opportunities and that Public Sector money is spent on him. Perhaps both views are partially true; but who should administer the guidance to students spending Public Sector money, and to what extent? Presumably Mr Harvey has in mind the already educated, such as himself. If the hypothesis behind his façade is of real consequence, and I remain unconvinced, it is by having sufficient free intellectuals to seek a remedy that the situation will be righted, not by limiting the intellectual development of the population. He himself argues the need for intellectual leadership in revolutionary developments.

Presumably on Harvey's Animal Farm the author considers himself so securely among the pigs that Mill's "liberty" can be modified by "discrimination"—his own. But who am I to criticise his intellectual article or socialist élitism, a mere "apathetic . . . unemployable . . . self-indulgent" English graduate who happens to believe that dropping out is not the alternative to getting one's own way.

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"Sinister" Left?

PROFESSOR DONALD MACRAE'S "Sinister Thoughts on Left and Right" [APRIL 1977] is reminiscent of a piece some years ago in *The Listener*, when the Langham Diarist of the week waxed hysterical about our society's bias in favour of right-handed people. It was claimed, if I remember rightly, that the positioning of door-handles and lavatory chains (amongst other things) is part of a major policy of discrimination against the left-handed.

At the time, *The Listener* refrained from publishing my protest, but again I feel that it is worth making. Unless the door is only passed through in one direction, its handle will be convenient for both left- and right-handed users according to the direction in which they are moving.

The fallacy in MacRae's argument is in his illustration from Kant. Supposing the "single intelligent eye" assigns the glove to a left hand, that left hand will be a right hand to any eye considering the problem from a position beyond the glove; and MacRae's examples which are inconsistent reveal precisely this ambivalence. Thus he has to specify that Mephisto's entry is "from the *performer's* left" though he fails to point out that the descent of the damned in the iconography of the Last Judgment is on the *viewer's* left. A few lines later he maintains that "the right hand of God is the hand that preserves"; but this cannot be from God's point of view as he has just said that the damned are descending on that side. On the other hand, when MacRae says that the heart is on the left he is referring to the owner's vantage point rather than the dissecter's. This is altogether far too eclectic an approach.

That the whole distinction is in fact completely dependent upon the standpoint of the beholder is beautifully illustrated in the paragraph entitled "STRUCTURALISM" in your page of *Life and Letters Today* (p. 95). Russian trade unions have an official structure that seems fascist to some, but which is acceptable to Mr Jack Jones just because he sees them as leftist. Left and Right will inevitably be in the eye of the beholder, and what the eye of the beholder sees will depend upon the position of the feet of the beholder.

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"A Class of One's Own"

IN HIS ARTICLE, "A Class of One's Own" (ENCOUNTER, November) Peregrine Worsthorne defends the class system on the grounds that a system based on merit would provide a society where "The top. . . would be excessively strong", and "The other" (*i.e.* the "bottom") would be "excessively weak." Is there not the slightest possibility of a society which acts to protect its members from domination by small groups or minorities? Is not the "top", if not excessively strong, at least pretty strong already?

> "Few can doubt that a much healthier balance is achieved by those on top having to carry a lot of dead wood, which weighs them down, and those at the bottom having to include a lot of untapped talent, which buoys them up."

Does the Labour Party really have so few members? How much "dead wood" and how much "untapped talent" can we afford? What is the effect on the talent for being untapped?

I find Mr Worsthorne's attitude objectionable. I can see no future in a system which rejoices in its own unfairness. Rather would I agree with John Rae (same issue) that the social deference the British display to rank or title needs to be thrown off. I can only express the hope that Mr Worsthorne's "obsolete attitude" is soon not only obsolete but extinct.

JAMES BRIMS

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Life & Letters Today

Moscow

GREAT UNEXPECTATIONS: Communist Party leader Leonid Brezhnev was yesterday elected head of state by the Supreme Soviet [writes Terry Bushell in the official Communist Party newspaper].

Not altogether unexpected, the proposal received prolonged applause both before and after the vote, which was unanimous.

MORNING STAR

London

SWEET & SOUR: *One nice snobby "Upstairs, Downstairs" anecdote concerns an argument script-writer Alfred Shaughnessy had with John Freeman, head of L.W.T., over the use of the word "sweet" as opposed to "pudding."*

Shaughnessy had written a scene in which Lady Marjorie ordered Hudson to "leave the sweet on the sideboard" (the year was 1910). Freeman sent a memo pointing out that sweet was a middle-class term for what some still called "dessert", *others* "pudding" *and a few* "afters."

"It was quite an interesting little academic battle about class and words. I had formed the impression that 'sweet' was the original upper-class word, which had slipped down from above into middle-class usage later on. So the upper classes, in order to maintain the differential found other words. For instance in Victorian times it was very chic to use French words like 'garage' and 'serviette' and only very upper-class people used them. Then when the middle classes started using them, it became horrifying and impossible for a lady to use the word 'serviette' and so she would talk about a 'napkin.' . . . I still think I'm right."

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

London

PRIZE: Mixed metaphor of the week comes from Lord Justice Lawson, quoted in our law report. The provisions of the relevant Acts, he said, were "pregnant with dangerous pitfalls".

THE TIMES

Washington D.C.

WASHINGTONESE: *It may be like commanding the ocean waves to stand still, but a small determined band of wordsmiths has infiltrated Washington in a valiant effort to restore the English language as a tool of government. Their task is to clear away the impenetrable linguistic sludge that passes for communication in millions of government documents, regulations, public notices and letters to citizens.*

In a place where a federal official can tell a reporter, as one did the other day, "This is an ongoing collaborative discussion revision process", that job is like the Duke of York's (Shakespeare's "Richard II"): "Alas, poor duke; the task he undertakes is numbering the sands and drinking oceans dry."

The task is a mammoth one. Officials seem to prefer three long cumbersome words where one short one will do nicely. Prisoners are kept not in jails but in "detention facilities"; ships do not collide in Coast Guard reports, they get into a "collision situation." Officials never decide what is most important; they "prioritize objectives" instead.

But circumlocution, bombast and euphemism are not the only reasons for bureaucratese. The plain truth is that government programs are very complex, Regulations have the force of law and must be defensible in court, where judges understand all those whereofs and hereuntos.

Here is a new regulation on selling hearing aids.

Before: "No seller shall represent that it or any of its employees, agents, sales persons and-or representatives is a physician or an audiologist, unless such is the fact."

After: "Don't say or hint you or anyone in your firm is a doctor of medicine or an audiologist if it isn't so."

Successes are counted by the syllable. Days are spent telling people that there's scarcely any difference between "inquire as to whether" and "ask if." It's a thankless chore.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

London

ANNOUNCEMENT: Neville Dreadberg, the avant-garde playwright, producer and self-publicist, has announced [Peter Simple reports] that in future he will not allow any of his plays to be performed in Chile in the presence of British Rugby players who have played against all-White teams in South Africa.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Malmesbury

LIKE ANIMALS: *I do wish [Elspeth Huxley writes] people would stop saying as Mr Parry did about the militant firemen, "they behaved like animals", when humans put on a particularly ill mannered, stupid and aggressive display. Animals do not mob and attempt to trample on each other when annoyed, or get angry when one of their number finds a greener patch of grass than another. Normally they kill only for food, and I do not suppose the fireman wanted to eat Mr Parry. They were behaving not like animals, but like humans.*

THE TIMES

Peking

CONFUCIUS?: Peking Central Library says it has put back on the shelves hundreds of books by Chinese and foreign authors which have been kept under lock and key for 10 years by the now disgraced Radicals.

The Radicals indulged in an orgy of book-burning and book-banning during the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s. Foreign authors who may again be read freely include Shakespeare, Dickens, Mark Twain, and Jack London.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

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